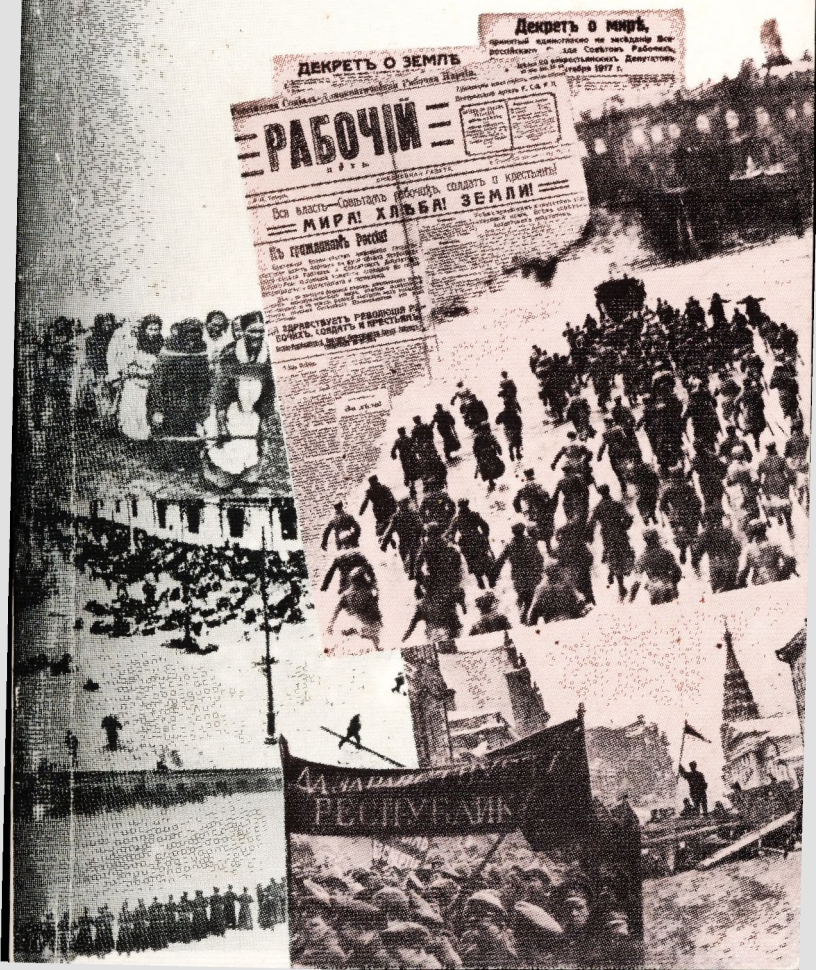
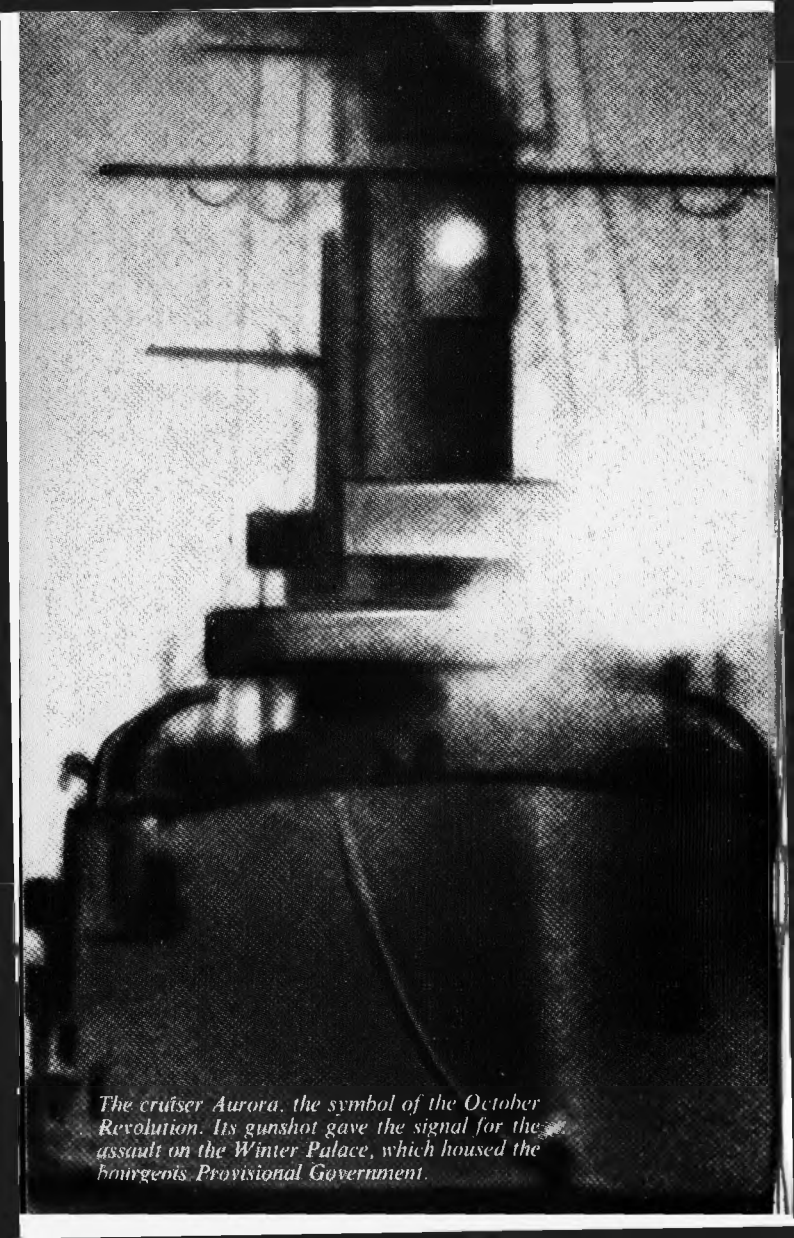


# HOW THE REVOLUTION WAS WON

Isaak MINTS





*The cruiser Aurora, the symbol of the October Revolution. Its gunshot gave the signal for the assault on the Winter Palace, which housed the bourgeois Provisional Government.*

*Seventy years of the Great October Social-  
ist Revolution*



# HOW THE REVOLUTION

*"...The workers' and peasants' revolution, about the necessity of which the Bolsheviks have always spoken, has been accomplished..."*

*"From now on, a new phase in the history of Russia begins, and this, the third Russian revolution, should in the end lead to the victory of socialism."*

*Lenin*

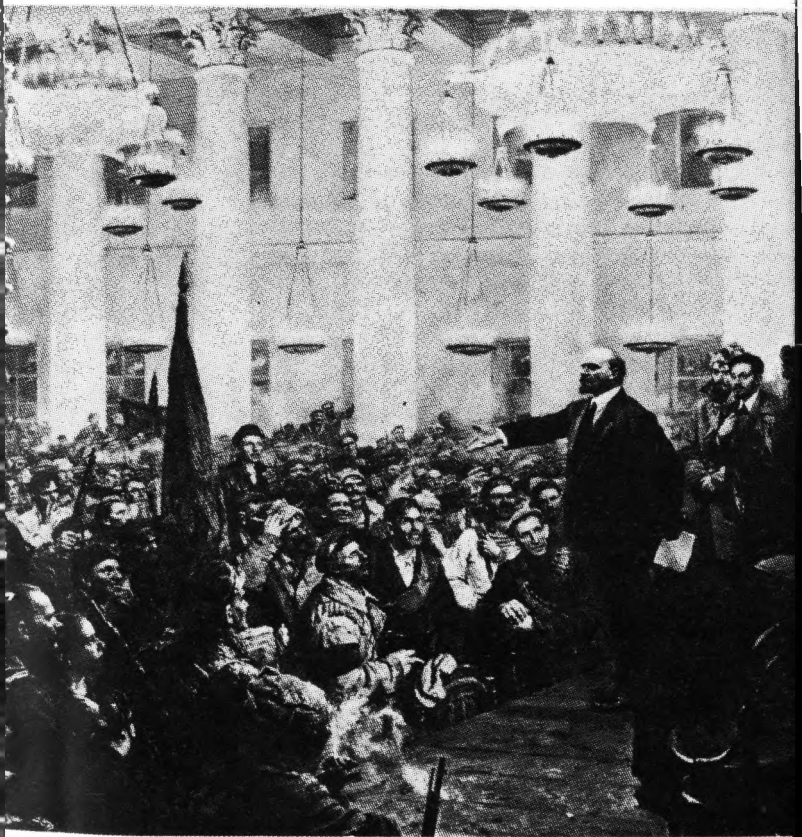


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# WAS WON

Isaak MINTS



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## **I. The Place and Role of the October Revolution in History**

### **Is Revolution an Accident or a Law-Governed Feature of Social Development?**

It is said that Tsar Nicholas I of Russia, when informed of the outbreak of the 1848 revolution in France, rushed into the hall where a ball was in progress and commanded in an authoritarian voice: "Messrs officers, saddle your horses: there is a revolution in France..."

Perhaps, the frightened monarch's cry was produced for an affectation, but it clearly conveyed the ruling classes' fear of revolution. History offers countless examples of this.

The Revolution of October 1917 in Russia filled the mighty of the earth with the fear of popular masses' wrath. This fear was frankly expressed by German General Max Hoffman in his notorious book *Moscow Is Everywhere*. He saw the hand of Moscow behind every outbreak of revolutionary fervour that swept the world after 1917 in spite of the fact that the young Soviet republic itself needed protection and support. The militant general merely sought to frighten his reader with the spectre of revolution. And today, as ever before, the responsibility for any action against tyranny and violence, no matter where it takes place, is attributed to "Soviet instigators".

Equally untenable is the crude fabrication about



the "export of revolution"—as if revolution were a commodity which could be packaged in any amount and shipped on order to any country at any time. Each country has its own specific national features, customs and historical traditions, which affect the way the class relations and the motive forces of revolution shape up. The popular masses cannot be artificially roused, led into the streets and organized for struggle.

A revolution cannot be imported into a country, forced upon it, or made to order; it ripens within its society. Were it otherwise, one could ask: Why does the all-mighty "exporter of revolution" leave out some countries and give preference to others? Or do some people have secret safeguards rendering their countries immune to revolution? And if they do, why don't they share their "anti-revolution pills" with their neighbours and friends?

The "inventors" of all these versions and theories and, to be more precise, those who inspire and support them have what they think is the only sure remedy: armed interference against those people who attempt to control their own destiny. Experience has shown, however, that even this method fails when the people resolutely, unanimously and courageously stand up to foreign armed intervention, as was the case in Vietnam, Cuba, Nicaragua and many other countries.

The apologists of capitalism stubbornly seek to dissuade the peoples from embarking on the road to revolution. They bring into play the "theory" of the high cost of revolution, which involves great sacrifices, disruption of the customary way of life and economic dislocation. This "theory" is hardly new or original: Russian landowners and capitalists as well had incessantly reiterated that the revolution would

bring incalculable casualties and would be a blood-bath. Everything was done to scare the people, but undaunted they challenged the old regime, and life has justified their bravery. Blood was shed only when the internal and external forces of counter-revolution plunged the country into a protracted civil war. But this was not the price of the revolution. It was the price of the counter-revolution, which drenched the country in blood.

Of late a new "theoretical" approach to the problem of revolution has been evolved: Why should there be revolution at all? What it gives can be achieved without this radical step. Look at the countries of the West: they have attained a high level of development without revolution. Here is an example to follow!

Those reasoning this way should be reminded that the United States owes its rapid development to two glorious American revolutions. In Britain, the revolution directed against the remnants of feudalism paved the way to the industrial revolution which turned the country into "the workshop of the world". The great French Revolution inspired the European continent and North America with its ideas and, together with the other French revolutions, put France among the highly-developed powers. The same can be said of all other industrially developed capitalist countries which claim now to be the spokesmen for the entire capitalist world: the basis for their success was laid by revolutionary processes of the past. The capitalist powers have made extensive use of the fruits of their revolutions, but at present deny this path, which has justified itself, to other countries. Indeed, what is appropriate for the masters is denied the slaves!

Having failed once again to scare the peoples with revolution, Western propagandists have begun to

distort the very essence of the concept of revolution. They are searching for a definition of revolution which, like a curse, would frighten people away at the very sound of it. Hence the terms "bloody outburst", "conspiracy of demagogues", "mass psychosis", "social pestilence", "psychological suggestion", and so on.

This set of incantations is far from the only scientific definition of revolution formulated long ago by the teachers of the proletariat and confirmed by historical experience. **Marxists define revolution as a profound and broad movement of the popular masses, in the course of which all antagonistic contradictions in society are resolved through the removal of the old classes from power and its passage to a new class.**

This definition makes it possible to distinguish a popular masses' revolution from both palace coups and reform. With any palace coups and reshufflings within military juntas, the ruling classes inevitably remain in power. As for reform, it does not matter in what manner it is effected—through a peaceable agreement or ruthless suppression of the opposition—or what concessions and sacrifices it involves. The end result is, again, preservation of power in the hands of the old classes.

Transition of power to a new class results in the **emergence of a new social system.** History has confirmed this law-governed feature of the development of mankind. Feudalism was eliminated through a process of bourgeois revolutions which took power away from the feudal lords and gave it to the capitalist class. In the present epoch, within the lifetime of one or two generations, capitalist society is replaced by a new social system—socialism, with power being assumed by a new class—the working class. At the root of this change is the **Great October Socialist**

**Revolution, which initiated mankind's transition from capitalism to socialism.**

## **Was the October Revolution Inevitable?**

This question seems rather pointless. The October Revolution took place and no one can erase the fact from history. Yet there are "experts" who assert that the revolution in Russia could have been avoided

Rummaging through history textbooks, some of these experts have discovered that in the last decade of the 19th century Russia's heavy industry tripled its output. Here was the beginning of industrialization, some Sovietologists point out enthusiastically.

It is true that at the end of the 19th century industrial production made a big stride forward in tsarist Russia, tripling its output. But the Sovietologists forget that by the beginning of the 20th century a world economic crisis had broken out which threw the country way back and was followed by a long drawn-out economic depression. True, though, there was a slight uplift in Russia's economy on the eve of the First World War (1914-18).

There are also some Sovietologists who admit that they have excessively criticized tsarism, which after all, they allege, promoted the development of science and culture in Russia. Why then were three-quarters of the country's population illiterate and the few who managed to escape the bondage of ignorance and acquire a secondary school education contemptuously called "cooks' children" by the authorities?

But as the seekers of an "alternative" to the revolution point out, tsarist Russia did have an educational system, with schools and universities,

Lenin founded the first Marxist organization in Russia—the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class.

The newspaper Iskra, under Lenin's guidance, became the organ of revolutionary Marxists who carried on, in extremely difficult conditions, immense ideological, political and organizational work to build a proletarian party of a new type.

# ИСКРА

— МАШИНА НАПЕЧАТАНИЯ  
— ПЕРВОЕ ИЗДАНИЕ

ДЕКАБРЬ 1906 ГОДА

## ИЗВЕСТИЯ

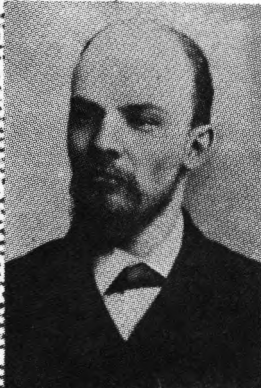
Вопрос о том, как организовать революционную борьбу пролетариата, является одним из самых важных и сложных. В настоящее время революционная борьба пролетариата приобретает все более и более массовый характер. Это требует от нас не только теоретической, но и практической работы. Мы должны научиться организовывать массовые движения, мы должны научиться бороться за власть. Это требует от нас не только теоретической, но и практической работы. Мы должны научиться организовывать массовые движения, мы должны научиться бороться за власть.

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## ВНЕШНЯЯ ПОЛИТИКА

Вопрос о том, как организовать революционную борьбу пролетариата, является одним из самых важных и сложных. В настоящее время революционная борьба пролетариата приобретает все более и более массовый характер. Это требует от нас не только теоретической, но и практической работы. Мы должны научиться организовывать массовые движения, мы должны научиться бороться за власть. Это требует от нас не только теоретической, но и практической работы. Мы должны научиться организовывать массовые движения, мы должны научиться бороться за власть.



В. И. Ленин



and a number of Russian scientists were world famous. This is true. However, it should be remembered that the development of capitalism, with the attendant use of machines, called for trained operatives capable of handling modern machinery. There was a need for foremen, engineers and more or less educated workers.

Here are a few figures to illustrate the situation at the time. The 1897 census in Russia showed that of the country's 126 million inhabitants only 21.1 per cent were literate. One hundred million people could neither read nor write. Statistics for the non-Russian peoples at the time are even more appalling: the illiteracy rate among the Tajiks was 99.5 per cent, among the Kirghiz 99.4 per cent, and among the Uzbeks 98.4 per cent, that is, very few could sign a document. Things did not improve much in the 20th century. For example, in 1913, 73 per cent of Russia's population over the age of eight were illiterate. This is not really surprising given the fact that tsarism spent less on public education than on the construction and maintenance of prisons. After reading in a report that there were almost no literate persons among the conscripts, Nicholas II remarked: "Thank God!" Vladimir Lenin called the Ministry of Public Education ("enlightenment" was the Russian word for it) under tsarism "the ministry of public benightedness". Technically and economically, tsarist Russia was a backward country. Suffice it to say that prior to the First World War Russia's per capita iron consumption was one-fourth that of Britain, one-fifth that of Germany, and only one-tenth that of the United States.

However, Russia occupied an intermediate position in the level of capitalist development and was ahead of all the industrially advanced countries in its growth rate. For example, on the eve of the First

World War half of the country's industrial labour force was concentrated at five per cent of the enterprises, while in the United States the same proportion of enterprises accounted for only a third of the industrial workers. This was due to the fact that Russia embarked on the path of capitalist development later than other countries. It did not have to wait for small workshops to develop gradually into industrial enterprises throughout the country: some industries aided by foreign capitalists, above all metallurgy, started straight away with the building of large factories.

The concentration of large numbers of workers in major factories and plants was a feature of Russia's development which contributed greatly to the success of the revolution. The Bolsheviks\* paid special attention to big factories, where they conducted explanatory work and trained new revolutionaries to take the place of those mercilessly arrested, exiled and eliminated by the secret police. Large enterprises became kind of citadels of Bolshevism. It was no accident that workers came to call large enterprises "Bolshevik factories".

Russia's backwardness was due to the insufficient development rather than the absence of capitalism in the country. It was hampered by the remnants of feudalism and serfdom, especially in the countryside. The proletariat in Russia suffered both from the development of capitalism and from its insufficient development. The capitalists ruthlessly exploited the

---

\* The Bolsheviks (orig. Russian "bolshinstvo"—majority)—since 1903 the name of those Social-Democrats in Russia who chose the road of revolutionary struggle and consistently adhered to the Communist ideals of Marx and Engels. The Bolsheviks were genuine Communists.

workers, for they always had at their disposal a huge reserve labour force: poverty-stricken peasants who had left their villages for the cities in search of work would crowd around factory gates, ready to work for beggarly wages. The insufficient development of capitalism, which had not yet eliminated the vestiges of serfdom, also gravely affected the proletariat. The police forbade the workers to organize themselves and defend their rights.

A larger part of the vast heterogeneous army of the exploited in Russia consisted of peasants. Landowners continued to hold sway in the countryside. Though officially abolishing serfdom in 1861, the tsarist government failed to provide the peasants with sufficient land. More than that, it turned over to the landowners a considerable part of the land previously owned and tilled by the peasants. While formally emancipated, the peasants were actually re-enslaved by large indemnities for the land. In addition, the authorities imposed on the peasants all kinds of legislative restrictions forbidding them to leave their villages and compelling them to return to their former masters to till their land. Essentially, serfdom continued to exist in the country, having only been legislatively renovated.

Thus, one of the basic contradictions in Russian life, and the cardinal cause of its backwardness, was the contradiction between the relatively well-developed capitalist industry and the semi-feudal countryside.

The situation in the national regions was particularly grave. Tsarism turned the "divide and rule" principle of the exploiter society into a system of oppression of the non-Russian peoples. It set one nation against another and the rich and the privileged of each nation against the working people. Peasants

were driven from fertile lands, which were turned over to landowners, tsarist police and civil service officials.

The downtrodden peoples were deprived of all rights. They were forbidden to publish books and newspapers in their native languages. There were few schools, and instruction in native languages was banned. Most of the non-Russians were contemptuously called "aliens". These vast masses of people were under the heel of a handful of landowners, with the autocratic monarch being the biggest landowner of them all and ruling the country in close collaboration with the capitalist tycoons.

Who could rouse and organize these popular masses to wage a struggle against oppression and misery?

The answer was provided by the first Russian revolution, which shook the country in 1905-07. In the course of the revolution all classes demonstrated their strength and potentialities in action. Although the revolution was defeated, it had given the people a chance to see all the classes as they were and an opportunity to compare their platforms and actions choosing the force which could emancipate the working people.

Frightened by the revolution, tsarism was compelled to grant some concessions. Sovietologists now wonder with an air of importance whether greater reforms should not have been carried out. But tsarism could not make greater concessions without ceasing to be tsarism. The absolute monarch would only go so far as to sign a decree on the convocation of the State Duma in Russia. The bourgeoisie of the entire world hailed the Duma as the closest thing to a parliament, but in fact it was far from it. The Duma had no right to elect or control the government.

Tsarism was prepared to grant concessions which somewhat affected the interests of the landowners but did not weaken its own power. In 1906, at the height of the peasants' revolutionary action, Stolypin, then a minister in the tsarist government, suggested allotting some land to a certain section of the peasantry, but at the expense of the peasants themselves rather than the landowners. Under Stolypin's plan peasants were allowed to receive, by paying an indemnity, a title to the plot of land they had tilled as community members. The idea was that the rich peasants, or *kulaks*, would buy additional land while the poor ones, who could not keep even their own lots, would have to sell them to the same kulaks. In this way tsarism would secure the support of the kulaks and strengthen its position in the countryside.

This intensified the antagonisms between the kulaks and the poor peasants. At night the sky would often become alight with flames rising from the burning landlords' estates. Thus, while introducing measures to suppress the revolution, tsarism only brought it nearer.

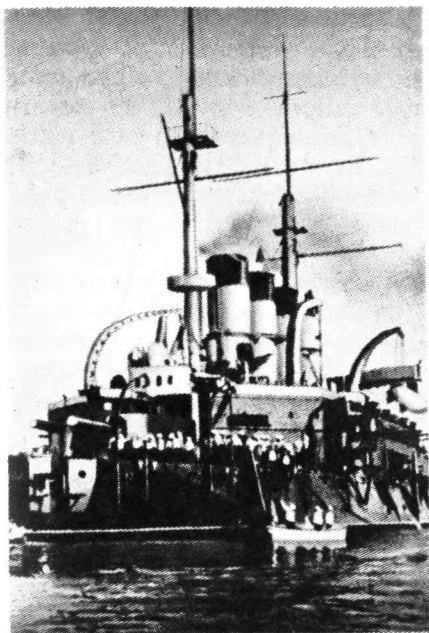
The bourgeoisie as a class was incapable of providing leadership to the people in their struggle for emancipation from the landowners' oppression and the lawlessness and omnipotence of tsarism. In Russia the capitalist class appeared on the political scene as an active force at the same time that the proletariat in the industrialized countries had already become fairly strong and made a bid for power. The main party of the Russian bourgeoisie was the Constitutional Democratic Party, whose very name indicated that it favoured a constitutional monarchy. The members of this party were referred to as *Cadets* (an abbreviation for Constitutional Democrats.) During the first Russian revolution the Cadets conducted



secret talks with tsarist officials on the possibility of their joining the government.

The bourgeoisie was afraid of having to deal with the proletariat single-handed and relied on tsarism for protection. It needed tsarism as a police force. All the lucrative places on the foreign markets had long since been seized by the major powers. To win a place for themselves, the Russian capitalists needed force, and force could be provided only by the autocratic government with its vast army. This explains the bourgeoisie's unwavering support of the tsarist nationalities policy, a policy of ruthless national oppression and tyranny. Incidentally, this support was one of the factors responsible for the longevity of the monarchy in Russia: confronted with obstacles to the development of the productive forces—obstacles of feudal origin—Russian capitalism grew at the expense of internal colonies and partly at that of foreign markets. Such expansion of capitalism helped somewhat to put off the solution of internal contradictions in the country.

The revolutionary movement in Russia showed that only the proletariat could become the leader and organizer of the working people as a whole. In the 1870s, the working class of Russia began a revolutionary struggle for its rights, and fifteen years later it succeeded in making the tsarist government to enact the first factory law, according to which the fines arbitrarily imposed on workers by factory owners were to be used to meet the needs of the workers themselves. In the developed capitalist countries, it took workers many decades of struggle to win the first factory laws. The proletariat was the first class in Russia to form a party of its own, thereby demonstrating its high class political awareness. This party was unlike the majority of the Social-Democratic parties of the time, most of which tended to parliamentary forms of struggle.



*In 1905 a bourgeois-democratic revolution took place in Russia. The army, the bulwark of tsarism, for the first time joined the revolutionary forces of the country: sailors of the battleship Potemkin mutinied.*

Vladimir Lenin built a party which reflected the militant, revolutionary character of the proletariat, a party of a new type representing not only the Russian proletariat, but also the working people of all the other nations of the empire, a party able to lead the proletariat in its revolutionary struggle.

It was the Russian proletariat who was the creator of Soviets (councils) of Workers' Deputies. Lenin immediately appraised the Soviets as not only a new

form of organization of the working class, but also a new form of government. New organs of government were quickly accepted by the entire people, becoming also a form of organization of a worker-peasant alliance. Proletarian forms of struggle, particularly strikes, were adopted by other strata of working people. This fact alone testified to the influence and a leading role played by the proletariat in the people's struggle.

The proletariat of Russia was international in composition and in spirit. A working-class aristocracy was practically non-existent, for the Russian bourgeoisie did not have the resources for social bribery which advanced capitalist powers obtained owing to colonial plunder.

The Bolshevik Party managed to safeguard the working class from opportunism and uphold the revolutionary traditions of the first Russian revolution. In 1910, a mere three years after its defeat, the working

*A wave of strikes and demonstrations swept across the country; they were ruthlessly crushed by the tsarist autocracy.*



class of Russia again put forward its revolutionary demands. In July 1914, barricades appeared in the streets of Petrograd, formerly St. Petersburg. But the advance of the revolution was interrupted by the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914.

## **The Outbreak of the First World War**

Those who adhere to the "theory" that wars are the cause of revolution say that the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05 gave birth to the first Russian revolution, that the First World War triggered off the revolutions in Russia in February and October 1917 and that the Second World War led to many other socialist revolutions in Europe, Asia and America.

However, the fact that such historical events coincide does not prove their interdependency; a distinction must be made here between cause and effect.

A revolution is unthinkable without a revolutionary situation and a general national crisis, i.e., without a state of things in which the ruling classes cannot rule the country any longer, cannot resolve the contradictions rending society, while the "lower classes", the working people, refuse to go on living in the old way and demonstrate this by increasingly resorting to large-scale actions of protest. Such critical situations do not arise suddenly, but shape up gradually in the course of society's development and under the influence of the conditions of life in the given country. In Russia, there were three revolutionary situations—in the late 1850s, late 1870s and at the beginning of the 20th century. Of them only the third one developed into a revolution, with the war accelerating this process. War sharpens the con-

traditions and is a component part of a revolutionary situation.

Such was the influence of the First World War engendered by imperialism. In the latter half of the 19th century, Germany, enriched by large war reparations paid by France, began to overtake Britain and France in industrial development and to demand a greater share of profits in the world market. Since by the end of the last century the world had already been carved up among the major powers, the German capitalists could attain their aims only by means of military force.

August 1, 1914 marked the beginning of a war for the repartition of the already divided world. The ruling classes of both sides declared that they were fighting a just and defensive war in national interests. In reality it was an unjust imperialist war on the part of both Britain, France, Russia and their allies, and Germany and its partners.

There was yet another factor that hastened the outbreak of the war—the growing revolutionary movement of the proletariat in all industrially developed countries. The ruling classes hoped that war would help them curb the working class, which had matured politically and grown strong by that time, compel workers of different countries to exterminate each other, and destroy the best members of the class—its active young generation who were prepared to raise the question of power.

The capitalist class fully supported the military policy of tsarism, which promised it fabulous profits. But Russia as an imperialist country was weaker than the other imperialist powers. Before long the overall backwardness of the country led to defeats at the front despite the valour and fortitude of the soldiers. After thirty months of war tsarist Russia broke

down; it had proved to be a giant with feet of clay.

The military defeats, immense casualties at the front, and hunger and dislocation in the rear increased mass unrest. In 1916, the number of strikers reached 1.5 million. Russia's strike activity was more intense than in any other warring country.

Russia lived in expectation of a revolution.

The tsarist government found out with dismay that repressions were not serving their function. Among court circles there was talk of withdrawing from the war. But such a change in policy would be extremely dangerous for tsarism. The big bourgeoisie would not hear of pulling out of the war, as it was bringing it colossal profits. The governments of the allied powers regarded the manoeuvres of Russia's rulers with suspicion, fearing loss of cannon fodder, which was what Russia meant to them. Using the ties of blood that existed between the Russian and German royal families, the tsarist government began cautiously to arrange talks with Germans on the possibility of signing a separate peace. The purpose was to untie its hands at the front and muster all forces to deal with the imminent revolution. The internal enemy was found to be more dangerous than the external one.

When the tsar's intentions to start talks with the Germans became known in the leading circles of Russian capitalists, they decided to get rid of him. They plotted to replace Nicholas with his under-age son and appoint as regent Nicholas' brother Mikhail, who, though not being an astute politician, was close to the capitalist magnates.

The Bolsheviks regarded the oncoming revolution as a bourgeois-democratic one, with the tasks to eliminate the survivals of feudalism and serfdom, abolish the monarchy, establish a democratic re-



*In the summer of 1916 thousands of railway workers took part in a strike in Moscow. Events such as this testified to the new revolutionary upsurge of the masses.*

public, introduce an eight-hour working day and turn over landowners' land to the peasants without redemption. But, as it had been in 1905, the Bolsheviks understood that the time of revolutionary action for the bourgeoisie was past; it could not and would not take the lead because it was too closely linked with the interests of tsarism.

In the ten years that had passed since the first Russian revolution the proletariat had forged itself in class battles, class distinctions in the countryside had become more pronounced while ties between the poor peasants and the proletariat had grown stronger. The Bolshevik Party had gained experience in class struggle and upheld its line against both Right and "Left" opportunism. All these developments gave reason to hope that the revolution would not remain at its bourgeois-democratic stage but would grow into a socialist revolution. The revolutionary government would not seek a separate peace with Germany but would immediately take steps to put an end to the plunderous imperialist war by proposing to all nations a universal democratic peace without annexations or indemnities. And should world imperialism reject such a peace and attempt to strangle the socialist revolution, the people would rise to defend it in a revolutionary war, with the sympathy and support of all the revolutionary forces throughout the world.

The struggle of Bolsheviks to win over the popular masses during the war was marked by heroism, self-sacrifice and boundless faith in the worthiness of their cause. In the capital and other industrial cities, the secret police were using provocateurs to track down Bolshevik organizations and arrest their members. Bolsheviks who carried on work in the army faced particularly great danger. A word of protest could bring penal servitude, one revolutionary leaflet or call to disobey the command meant the firing squad. Many thousands of revolutionaries perished, but the Bolshevik Party fulfilled its duty: it was the only party which prepared the army for going over to the side of the revolution.

Since the Bolsheviks worked underground, the size



of the Party membership is difficult to establish. Estimates range from 35,000 to 40,000 members. Bolshevik organizations operated in 200 cities. The Party's strength lay in its ties with the masses, unity in theory and organizational cohesion. The Bolsheviks knew no factions: they firmly upheld one common programme, pursued a single policy line and committed themselves to a single organizational principle. Active non-Party revolutionaries rallied around the Bolsheviks, whose adherence to principle, consistency, staunchness and faithfulness to the cause won the hearts and minds of all who were ready to fight for the interests of the people and the cause of the revolution.

## **II. The Peaceful Period of the 1917 Revolution**

### **The Victory of the Second Russian Revolution**

At the end of February 1917 the country was swept by the news that Petrograd was on strike. On February 23, over 100,000 workers went on strike in the capital; the next day their number increased to more than 200,000 and a day later to nearly 400,000. In the course of three days a mass protest developed into a general strike that irrefutably testified to the people's readiness for action.

In those days the Bolshevik Party provided leadership to the movement both in Petrograd and in other cities and towns.

The Bolsheviks in the capital—there were more than 2,000 of them in 1916—led demonstrations, sent Party activists where they were needed and conducted propaganda work among the soldiers. Every evening, gathering at secret meeting places, members of the Petersburg\* Committee analyzed current events and planned actions for the next day. On February 25, after becoming assured of the success of the general strike, the Committee decided that the time had come for an armed uprising. This involved seizing the central telephone exchange, erecting barricades in the

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\* In 1914 Petersburg was renamed Petrograd, but the Committee retained its old name until November 1917.

streets, forming combat detachments and occupying factories.

An appeal was issued to the soldiers to support the uprising. Representatives from the capital were dispatched to Moscow and Nizhny Novgorod (present-day Gorky) to rally support for the uprising. This clearly showed that the Bolsheviks did not regard the events in Petrograd as a local phenomenon. The decision was taken to organize special factory committees and set up an Information Bureau consisting of their representatives, which would be turned, in the course of the development of events, into a Soviet of Workers' Deputies. The idea of Soviets as new organs of power had been so firmly grasped by the Bolsheviks and assimilated by the masses that as soon as news of an uprising came it was decided to organize Soviets.

A provocateur had penetrated the Petersburg Committee, who was later exposed and sentenced to be shot. On the night of February 25, 1917 he managed to transmit a copy of the record of the committee meeting to the secret police. The latter reported to the authorities: "In the course of the two days of disturbances which took place in the city, the Petrograd organization of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party decided to use for Party ends the movement that has emerged and to impart to it an obviously revolutionary direction by assuming leadership of the masses participating in it." We quote from the police document in order to stress that the tsarist authorities knew well who was the real leader of the movement; this refutes the contentions of modern falsifiers of the history of the Russian revolution that the Bolsheviks did not participate in the struggle, were taken unawares and forgot about the Soviets.

Since their emergence in the course of the first Russian revolution, the Soviets had been regarded by the Bolsheviks as bodies of the insurrection and of the new power. In the very first days of the general strike elections of deputies to the Soviets were held at some factories in Petrograd on the workers' initiative.

On the evening of February 27 the worker deputies came to the Taurida Palace. The situation there seemed peculiar to the workers' representatives. They found there the leaders of the State Duma Menshevik\* group, who were taking no part in the street fighting. Cunning politicians, they quickly sized up the situation and attempted to assume control of the developments by declaring themselves the provisional Executive Committee of the Soviet. Entering the palace after street fights, Bolsheviks found that there was already an Executive Committee, which no one had elected.

The Mensheviks, like the Socialist-Revolutionaries\*\*, did not deny that the Soviets of Work-

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\* At its 2nd Congress in 1903 a split took place in the Party. A minority (menshinstvo, hence Mensheviks) disagreed with Lenin's principle (i.e. with the Bolsheviks) concerning the building of a party of a new type able and ready to head the revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and for socialism. They adhered to the positions of old Social Democracy which tended to parliamentary activity. From this time on the Mensheviks began gradually abandoning such basic principles of Marxism as recognition of the need for proletarian dictatorship, a revolutionary agrarian programme, and so on, and degenerated into an opportunistic group favouring conciliation with the bourgeoisie.

\*\* The Party of Socialist-Revolutionaries (SRs) was formed at the end of 1901. They held that all working people—proletarians, peasants and intellectuals—were in equal measure the driving force of the revolution. While recognizing in principle the role of mass organizations, they adhered to the "heroes and throng" theory and regarded terrorism as the chief method of promoting the revolution.

ers' Deputies were a fairly acceptable and an efficient form of organization uniting workers irrespective of trade, length of service, nationality, religion, sex, etc. But they maintained that the Soviets should not undertake the organization of the uprising and become organs of power. On the spurious claim of wishing to preserve the "class purity" of the workers' organs, they opposed the unification of workers and soldiers in the Soviets. The Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries wanted the Soviets to function as trade-union bodies.

*A sitting of the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.*



The Petrograd Soviet decided to set up a food commission to take an inventory of all stocks of grain, both state and private, and to organize food supplies for the army and for the people of Petrograd, whom the tsarist authorities had left without food in an attempt to suppress the imminent revolution. The responsibility for food supply was taken from the tsarist authorities, and the direction of the army from the tsarist command. A decision was taken to send representatives of the Soviet to organize its branches in the districts and to launch the publication of *Izvestiya* as the Soviet's daily newspaper.

All these decisions were revolutionary in nature and they turned the Soviet into an organ of power.

### **Dual Power Emerges**

On the day of the insurrection Nicholas II signed a decree dissolving the State Duma and dispatching a punitive expedition to the capital.

On the morning of February 27 the State Duma was informed of the royal decree on its dissolution. What was to be done? To ignore the decree meant arrest. To submit to it meant losing all possibility of exercising control over the situation in the country. Faced with a formidable dilemma, the deputies made what they felt to be a clever move: they obeyed the tsar's order on the dissolution of the Duma but assembled in a hall next door for a private meeting. At that meeting the deputies decided to set up a Provisional Committee of the Duma.

That night it became known that the Petrograd Soviet had met and taken its first decisions. The Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies had in fact

assumed control of the situation. The Provisional Committee, in turn, attempted to act as head of the movement. No doubt, the leaders of the bourgeoisie wanted to buy time before the arrival of the punitive force. On the night of February 28 the Provisional Committee decided to assume the task of restoring state and public order and form a new government.

The regiments of the garrison were informed of the Provisional Committee's decision and were ordered to appear at the residence of the State Duma in full strength together with the officers. The speeches there were not very encouraging, mostly about maintaining order and calm and having confidence in the officers. The need to continue the war was also mentioned. The soldiers, longing for peace, did not show any enthusiasm and barely managed a feeble "Hurrah!"

Heartened by the temporary success, the bourgeois politicians decided to continue their course of action. An order was signed whereby the soldiers were to return to their barracks and hand over to the authorities the arms taken from the regimental arsenals, and officers who had left their units at the time of the uprising were to return to their regiments.

The order was received with outrage by the entire Petrograd garrison. Officers were barred from the barracks, while those officers who remained with the regiments were arrested by rebellious soldiers. A number of units elected new commanders from among the ranks. The whole garrison was in turmoil. Growds of armed soldiers again appeared in the streets, where they were joined by workers' detachments. The excited soldiers rushed to the Soviet, demanding that the Provisional Committee's order be rescinded and that there be no return to the old ways in the regiments.

On March 1, the Petrograd Soviet issued Order No. 1 for the garrison, which played an exceptionally important role in winning the whole army over to the side of the revolution. The order consisted of the following points: (1) in all the companies, battalions, regiments, batteries and squadrons committees of soldiers' deputies shall immediately be elected from among the ranks; (2) one representative from each company shall be elected to the Petrograd Soviet; (3) in all their political actions army units shall submit to the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and to their committees; (4) orders of the military commission of the State Duma shall be carried out as long as they do not run counter to the orders and ordinances of the Soviet; (5) arms shall be placed at the disposal and under the control of the committees and shall not be issued to officers; (6) the soldiers shall observe and maintain discipline while in formation, and outside it they shall enjoy the same rights as all citizens; (7) officers shall no longer be addressed by their titles but rather with the words: "Mr Officer", etc.

Adhering to their erroneous conviction that in a bourgeois revolution the country should be governed by the bourgeoisie, the SRs and Mensheviks who headed the Soviet decided to yield power to the bourgeoisie. At a joint meeting they agreed to form a government based on the following points: 1) a general and immediate amnesty for political and religious prisoners; (2) freedom of speech, of the press, association, assembly, and strikes; (3) abolition of discrimination based on social status, religion and nationality; (4) preparation for the convening of a Constituent Assembly on the basis of universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot; (5) replacement of the police with a people's militia; (6) universal, equal elections to local bodies of self-government;





*Servicemen on the front hail the news of the overthrow of the autocracy.*

(7) continued armament and stationing in Petrograd of army units that had taken part in the revolution.

None of these demands laid down by the Mensheviks and SRs went against the wishes of the bourgeoisie or tied its hands. Most of them were met in the course of the revolution.

It is noteworthy that the terms for the transfer of power to the bourgeoisie did not touch on the question of the form of government—whether the monarchy would be preserved or a republic proclaimed; both parties calling themselves “Socialists” seemed to have forgotten about the proclamation of a republic, while the bourgeois leaders were in no hurry to decide the fate of the monarchy.

At that stage the SRs and Mensheviks were afraid to lose the support of the revolutionary masses. Therefore, the question of “Socialists” entering the government was put off for the time being. As for the bourgeoisie, it was in no need of their assistance as yet. Its leaders felt that they could retain power and cope with the situation on their own.

On March 2, 1917 the Provisional Government was formed.

After stalling for two days, on March 3 Nicholas II, heeding the persistent recommendations of the supreme army command, abdicated the throne in favour of his brother Mikhail. But Mikhail refused the crown. The monarchy collapsed, though this fact was in no way legally formalized.

There emerged in the country an historically rare situation—dual power. Power was in the hands of both the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet, the latter having the support of the armed masses.

How can one explain the fact that, while the revolution was carried out by workers and soldiers, most of whom were peasants in uniform, power was seized by the bourgeoisie? Why, though it was the Bolsheviks who led the masses in battles, the leadership of the Soviets, the people's organs of power, fell into the hands of the SRs and Mensheviks?

The chief explanation was that the population of the country was overwhelmingly petty-bourgeois. After the fall of the autocracy millions of people suddenly became involved in politics. At first they did not understand the difference between the various parties and could not distinguish between their real defenders and mere careerists, time-servers, smooth-talking lawyers and other professional people who were in fact revolutionaries only in word. The composition of the proletariat itself had also changed: during the war many peasants had come to work at factories and plants, and a part of the petty bourgeoisie had begun to work in munitions factories to escape conscription. The petty-bourgeois elements had brought with them their prejudices and backward notions.

All this explains why the bourgeoisie temporarily

came out on top in a revolution accomplished without it and essentially against it.

### **“King for a Day”: The Undivided Rule of the Bourgeoisie**

Having gained power from the hands of the victorious people, the bourgeoisie hastened to strengthen its hold on it. The Provisional Government sought to preserve the old machinery of state. The revolutionary Petrograd Soviet had determined to abolish the tsarist authorities, but the Provisional Government continued to pay government officials their salaries. It was only on May 1, two months after the victory of the revolution, that a decree was issued on retiring tsarist officials—with large pensions.

The Provisional Government left the tsarist laws intact, even those that had been adopted without the State Duma. The announcement on the formation of the Provisional Government said that the police would be replaced by a people's militia, but in fact gendarmes and top police officers were replaced by army officers. In remote localities practically no changes took place, and in regions inhabited chiefly by non-Russians the old administrative apparatus was wholly preserved.

The announcement said nothing about Russia's continued engagement in the war. Of course, the bourgeoisie was not willing to give up that source of enormous profits but was afraid to state so openly.

The war was now referred to as a national, defensive and revolutionary war, the nature of which was said to have changed since the overthrow of tsarism. The bourgeoisie was going to great lengths to keep

the army at the front and prevent revolutionary unrest from spreading among the ranks.

The announcement failed to mention yet another vital issue, that of land. However, fearing that the peasant movement for land would grow and being uncertain as to whether or not the soldiers, most of them peasants, would agree to engage in punitive operations if need be, the Provisional Government stated that a decision on the agrarian question would be postponed until the Constituent Assembly was convened, but gave no indication as to when this would be. The government decided to sacrifice the land of the tsar and the grand princes and set up land committees to draft a law on land for the future Constituent Assembly. The peasants had little faith in the effectiveness of these measures, however, and began more and more frequently to take the solution of the problem into their own hands; they seized landowners' land and implements and refused to pay the high rent demanded for them, and so on.

The bourgeoisie's rapacious appetites for profits were unchecked. The Provisional Government lifted all restrictions on business activities, and the entrepreneurs managed to obtain large government subsidies for their business undertakings. The prices for munitions products soared, and profiteering assumed monstrous proportions.

Dazzled by profits, the capitalist class, which had become brazen without government control, felt it time to speak out on the war issue, which the allies had been pressing it to do. On April 20, 1917 the press published a note sent to the allies by Foreign Minister Milyukov on Russia's continued participation in the war. The news of the note of the militant minister who acted on the Provisional Government's instructions and with its full consent was a bolt from

the blue for the masses. Thousands of soldiers poured into the streets in protest against this action and began heading for the building where the government was in session.

The Menshevik and SR leaders of the Soviet tried to calm the indignant demonstrators and convince the government to modify the note. The Central Committee of the Bolsheviks adopted a resolution drafted by Lenin pointing out that the demands to remove one minister or another reflected the political naivety of the masses—they hoped to substitute government reshufflings for class struggle. “Only by taking—with the support of the majority of the people—the whole power of the state into its own hands, will the revolutionary proletariat, together with the revolutionary soldiers, create, in the shape of the Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies, a government which will be trusted by the workers of all countries and which will alone be capable of quickly putting an end to the war by means of a truly democratic peace.”\*

An organized demonstration was held in Petrograd under Bolshevik slogans, with more than 100,000 people taking part. Demonstrations took place in other industrial centres of Russia as well.

The Provisional Government felt confused. General Kornilov, Commander of the Petrograd Military District, suggested to use guns and was on the point of giving the orders before the utterly frightened ministers managed to talk him out of it. The Provisional Government was on the verge of collapse. The Petrograd Soviet of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies, supported by the armed people, could now take power without encountering resistance. But the petty-

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\* V. I. Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 24, p. 185.

bourgeois leaders in the Soviet were more afraid of this than of guns; terror-stricken conciliators claimed that the country could not be governed without the bourgeoisie.

The bourgeois leaders decided to take advantage of the panic and pull themselves out of the morass into which they had been forced by the indignant people. At a joint session with the leaders of the Soviet, the ministers appealed to those who had already once thrown them a life buoy: "Help us, or take over the government." The leaders of the SR and Menshevik parties agreed to enter the government in order to rescue it, and the first coalition government was formed.

### **"All Power to the Soviets!"**

After the victory of the February revolution the Bolshevik Party emerged from its underground status and was now for the first time in a position to act openly. *Pravda*, the newspaper of the Central and Petersburg committees of the Party, reappeared on March 5, 1917.

The Party committees were reorganized on the principle of democratic centralism. All Party bodies, from top to bottom, were made elective. Bolshevik newspapers began to circulate in Moscow and other industrial centres. Bolsheviks who had been arrested by the tsarist authorities were released from prison. Members of the Central Committee and leading Party workers began to return from exile, prison and abroad. They included Felix Dzerzhinsky, Valeryan Kuibyshev, Grigori Ordzhonikidze, Yakov Sverdlov, Joseph Stalin, Stepan Shaumyan, and many others.

The new situation in the country demanded that



*On April 4, 1917 Lenin delivered a speech before the activists of the Bolshevik Party in Petrograd, in which he presented his theses—a plan of struggle for the switchover from the bourgeois-democratic to the socialist revolution. These theses were called the “April Theses”.*

*Lenin's close associates: Felix Dzerzhinsky, Yakov Sverdlov, Joseph Stalin.*



the Party adopt a new orientation, new strategy and tactics, and new slogans.

In the very first days of the revolution, while still abroad, Lenin wrote *Letters from Afar* in which he indicated the line the Party should pursue after the February Revolution. He wrote that the revolution was not yet over, that only its first stage had been completed, and that the workers must display heroism to achieve victory in the second stage. He put forward the task of forming a workers' militia or

*"Long Live the International Holiday of Labour!", "Long Live Socialism!"—were the slogans under which the workers and soldiers of Petrograd celebrated May Day in 1917. The international workers' holiday was for the first time celebrated freely in Russia.*





workers' home guard so as to prevent the bourgeois government from restoring the police and saving the monarchy. "Our tactics: no trust in and no support of the new government; ... arming of the proletariat is the only guarantee; immediate elections to the Petrograd City Council; no rapprochement with other parties,"\* he said.

On April 3, 1917, after travelling through Germany and neutral Sweden, Lenin returned to Russia together with a group of other émigrés. The long period of forced exile was over. The masses gave their leader a rousing welcome on his arrival. The next day he delivered a report at the Taurida Palace, dealing first of all with the burning question of the war. The character of a war, he said, is determined by the class that wages it. The war had been waged by tsarism, which had ruled the country in a close alliance with the magnates of capital. The tsar had been overthrown, but power had passed into the hands of the bourgeoisie. The war was in the interests of the bourgeoisie which continued to wage it. The war had become neither a people's war nor a revolutionary war. It remained an imperialist war on the part of Russia as well, although a revolution had taken place in the country. The task now was to conduct propaganda among the masses, to explain to them the imperialist character of the war and to convince them that a truly democratic peace could not be achieved without overthrowing the power of the bourgeoisie, and that the Provisional Government, responsible for the conduct of the war, could not be trusted.

Lenin stressed in his report that the Bolsheviks were not totally pacifist, and that if power went into

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\* V. I. Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 23, p. 292.

the hands of the workers and peasants, they would stand up and defend it.

After stating the Bolsheviks' attitude to war, Lenin proceeded to analyze the political situation in Russia, the main peculiarity of which was dual power: alongside the Provisional Government as the organ of the capitalists and landowners there existed a new organ of power, the power of the people—the Soviets, which had sprung up throughout the entire vast country.

The bourgeoisie sought to eliminate the dual power and seize all power by taking it from the Soviets and disbanding them. The revolution could be saved only by upholding the Soviets and transferring all power to them. "All Power to the Soviets!"—this was the main slogan of the Bolsheviks.

But at the moment the Soviets were dominated by SRs and Mensheviks. There were few Soviets in which the Bolsheviks held the majority. Thus, it would appear that the Bolsheviks were calling for transfer of power to the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks. Lenin explained this apparent contradiction as follows. The Soviets wielded power, and the bourgeoisie knew and felt this at every step of their activities. The point was to have the entire state power transferred to the Soviets, which could not be achieved without breaking away from the bourgeoisie. The "All Power to the Soviets!" slogan signified above all a complete break with the capitalists, the dismantling of their power apparatus and the establishment of a new state machinery based on Soviets which would embrace the entire country.

Of course, the mere transfer of all power to the Soviets would not change the petty-bourgeois nature of the SRs and Mensheviks, they would continue to vacillate, pine for bygone times, and strike compro-

mises with bourgeois elements. But such vacillations would make themselves felt very soon, and ultimately a choice would have to be made between the bourgeoisie and the people.

Most importantly, the "All Power to the Soviets!" demand did not at all mean the formation of a government by the parties that held the majority in the Soviets. It did not imply using the old method of government whereby the ruling parties would appoint ministers and the ministers would head the old ministries and departments and would be accountable to the parliament or the body acting in its stead. If the old administrative apparatus, created by the landlords and capitalists to defend their power, were to be preserved, even the most radical measures initiated by ministers would be bogged down in the bureaucratic machinery or trimmed by experienced officials, thereby losing their radical nature. The old apparatus—especially the police, the judiciary and the army—had to be broken down and replaced by the Soviets. The Soviets themselves would carry out the functions of government, through them the people would administer the state.

Until then Marxists had regarded a parliamentary republic as a form of transition to socialism. But, on the basis of the experience of the Paris Commune as well as of the Soviets formed during the first Russian revolution and especially after the February Revolution, Lenin concluded that the Soviets presented the best form of organization of a society built on socialist principles.

Lenin's conclusion became a landmark in the development of Marxism.

In agrarian policy Lenin reiterated the Bolsheviks' demands for the confiscation of all landed estates without redemption and for the nationalization of all

land. He suggested taking into account the class differentiation in the countryside and focussing attention on the establishment of Soviets of Agricultural Labourers' Deputies. He also recommended to set up model farms on large estates (ranging from 100 to 300 hectares), which would be publicly-owned and put under the control of the Soviets of Agricultural Labourers' Deputies. These guidelines marked a new step in the development of Lenin's agrarian programme in the new conditions. Land could be given to the peasants even without a revolution, but in order to provide poor peasants with land and farm implements it was necessary to carry out a socialist revolution.

In industry, Lenin proposed that the manufacture and distribution of products be put under the Soviets' control and all banks be merged to form a single national bank. These measures, together with the nationalization of all land, did not immediately introduce socialism in the country, but in their totality they meant a transition to it.

Lenin called for a complete break with the Second International, which had sided with the imperialists, and for the organization of a new International that would be free of opportunism and social chauvinism. He considered it essential to change the very name of the Party from Social-Democratic (inasmuch as Social-Democratic leaders throughout almost the entire world had betrayed socialism) to Communist, a name which described more accurately the aim of the Party's struggle—the building of communism.

Such were the new guidelines of the Bolshevik Party, which demonstrated that the Party was setting its course towards socialism. They constituted a programme for the period of the **development of the**

**bourgeois-democratic revolution into a socialist revolution.**

All the bourgeois and class-collaborationist parties met the Bolsheviks' programme with extreme hostility. Their newspapers alleged that Lenin had raised the banner of civil war and was disregarding the interests of the country as a whole.

In their hatred of Lenin and his idea of a socialist revolution the bourgeoisie resorted to monstrous slander, alleging that Lenin had connections with the German General Staff. This slander was backed, and had perhaps been inspired, by the embassies of the allied powers. On the day of Lenin's expected arrival in Russia, April 3, the British Embassy told the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Russia that Lenin was an extremely dangerous man who would have many followers. Meanwhile, the French Embassy warned the Russian authorities about Lenin's passage through Germany. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs heeded these warnings: a Deputy Foreign Minister ordered that the information about Lenin's movements be published, but without mentioning its source, i.e. those who recommended that the baiting of the Bolshevik leader be started.

This campaign neither frightened the Bolsheviks nor shook their determination. Armed with a precise, clear-cut Leninist programme, they expanded their educational work among the masses. Their voice was heard everywhere—in factories and plants, barracks and bread lines, in the streets. In no less than two months after the Bolshevik Party emerged from its underground status its membership had nearly trebled—a vivid testimony to the fact that Lenin's ideas were rapidly winning the country's working people.

## **“Europeanization on the Go”: A Coalition Government**

A coalition of political parties in running the state was a novelty in Russia. Up until this time the bourgeoisie had been content to stay under the wing of the two-headed eagle, protected by tsarism against revolutionary pressure exerted by the masses and with its help gaining access to markets abroad. True, as its economic strength grew the bourgeoisie began to hanker after political power, not wishing anymore to share its profits with the tsarist authorities.

As for the parties of the petty bourgeoisie, they grasped even less the idea of a ruling coalition, having never been let into the “entry hall” of power.

However, the course of the class struggle compelled the bourgeois government to accept a new combination of power: in April the bourgeoisie saw that it could not cope with the situation on its own. Dizzy with their unexpected political ascension, the leaders of the petty-bourgeois parties forgot that they were “socialist” and entered the bourgeois government, which was openly pursuing counter-revolutionary policies. History had played a cruel joke upon them: during the first Russian revolution petty-bourgeois “socialists” refused to accept the idea of joining the revolutionary government on the grounds that it was impermissible to work together with representatives of the bourgeoisie, whereas in the second revolution they became members of a counter-revolutionary government. They apparently did not mind the fact that while asking for help the bourgeoisie nevertheless saw to it that its preponderance in the government was assured: the coalition

government consisted of ten representatives of the bourgeois parties and six petty-bourgeois "socialists".

Having no parliamentary experience of their own, the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties of Russia could only look to the rich experience of the West. In Western Europe the formation of governments consisting of representatives of different parties had been a common practice since 1848, when in France the petty-bourgeois socialist Louis Blanc became a member of the bourgeois government. Moreover, Western socialists themselves readily shared their experience. Delegations comprised primarily of socialists began arriving in Russia from France, Britain and the United States to persuade their Russian colleagues to follow their example and organize a coalition government.

As may be inferred from the political practice of capitalism in those days, a coalition government was designed to accomplish two tasks. First, it was to erect a "socialist" screen behind which the bourgeoisie could continue its policy of preserving capitalism, and to build a kind of dyke that would resist the pressure of revolutionary waves and hold back the stormy sea of the people's anger. Second, it was to use others to attain aims which the bourgeoisie could not achieve on its own. The preceding one-party government had proved unable to make the masses accept the idea of Russia's continued participation in the war. On the contrary, the very first attempt to make such a declaration had all but ended in the removal of the bourgeoisie from power. Now it was the task of the petty-bourgeois "socialists" to persuade the masses. The preceding bourgeois government had failed to persuade the peasants not to press for a solution of the agrarian question; now it was the

“socialists’” job to reassure them, postpone solving the question of land and then remove it from the agenda altogether.

It seemed that the calculations of the Russian bourgeoisie and its foreign advisers were correct. As if out of gratitude for having been elevated to the rank of ministers, the petty-bourgeois “socialists” began pursuing a policy aimed at preserving capitalism.

This above all concerned the organization of the state. The bourgeoisie sought to retain as much of the old as possible. The Senate, an institution in which tsarism had introduced its loyal adherents, was preserved, and government decrees and ordinances continued to be announced on behalf of the Senate. Also preserved was the State Duma, dominated by capitalists and landowners and elected in keeping with tsarist laws which considerably limited the representation of the ordinary people. Moreover, the State Duma often met in sessions attended by deputies of all convocations and interfered, needless to say, in the interests of the bourgeoisie, in the solution of state questions. The sessions were openly addressed by monarchists who called for drastic measures to curb the revolution. The monarchists and other State Duma deputies were supported by “socialist” ministers—former deputies—who did not demand the dissolution of the tsarist “semi-parliament”, thus sustaining the notion that it was a legitimate institution.

The monarchy had been overthrown, but the coalition government never announced the establishment of a republic. The question of the form of government was postponed until the Constituent Assembly was convened, but the date of the convocation was not set. Tsarist generals kept their posts in the army.



With rare exceptions, tsarist laws remained intact. Russia in those days might be described as a monarchy without a monarch.

A peculiar situation took shape in the coalition government concerning the question of war as well as other topical questions: the "socialist" ministers talked, while the representatives of the bourgeoisie acted. The speeches of the petty-bourgeois "socialists" and their newspapers abounded in calls, arguments and contentions that the nature of the war had changed, that now the war was being waged not in the interests of tsarism, but to save the revolution. The "socialist" ministers even agreed with the Bolsheviks' call for peace without annexations and indemnities, but sought to make it serve the interests of the bourgeoisie: by the phrase "without annexations" they meant liberation of the peoples conquered during the war and not of all the peoples enslaved by imperialism. At the front, hasty measures were being carried out to modify the system of military organizations, from the lower units to armies and fronts. They were dominated by petty-bourgeois "socialists", who were prevailing upon the soldiers to continue the war.

On the question of introducing an eight-hour work-day, the "socialist" ministers took the position of the capitalists and urged the working people not to press that demand.

The coalition government supported the landowners and capitalists in their demand that a decision on the agrarian question be postponed until the Constituent Assembly was convened. Losing faith in such promises, the peasants began tackling the problem "from below". The government replied by stepping up reprisals, responsibility for which was shared by the "socialist" ministers, who had covered up the

punitive practices with a "socialist" banner.

On the nationalities question, the coalition government not only spoke out against the self-determination of nations, it also vehemently opposed any extension of their rights in the sphere of national development such as election of their leaders, instruction in school in their own languages, and so on. In fact, the coalition government preserved the tsarist "prison of nations", only slightly refurbishing it.

All this activity, or more precisely, inactivity, exposed the worthlessness of the government and its "socialist" ministers. Broad sections of the population instinctively felt that their interests were being sacrificed and that the SR and Menshevik leaders were steadily distancing themselves from the working people. The feelings of the masses found expression in a determined action: they began recalling from the Soviets the deputies who had failed to justify their confidence and sending Bolsheviks in their stead. There had been a great number of such instances, particularly in Petrograd.

The Bolsheviks had always regarded the defence of the interests of the proletariat, of all working and exploited people, as the Party's main task. After the overthrow of the autocracy power actually remained in the hands of the capitalists and landowners. It was against them that the thrust of the revolutionary forces was now directed.

### **The Second Government Crisis: Petrograd Workers and Garrison Support the Bolsheviks**

The bourgeoisie secretly sought an opportunity to launch an offensive of the Russian army



*After the victory of the February 1917 Revolution the Bolshevik Party emerged from its underground status and for the first time gained an opportunity to act openly. On March 5, 1917 the newspaper Pravda, the central organ of the Party which had been closed by the tsarist satraps on the eve of the First World War, began to circulate again.*

at the front. The allied powers, which supplied Russia with money and arms, insisted on action. For the bourgeoisie this move seemed to offer a way out of the critical situation in the event of either success or failure. A successful offensive would consolidate its power and restore the authority of the command in the army. On the other hand, should the offensive fail, the blame could be put on the opponents of the war, the Bolsheviks. In either case it was hoped that the war would snuff out the flames of the revolution. The bourgeois and petty-bourgeois press began calling in unison for a resumption of hostilities. While the "socialist" ministers and their parties delivered

speeches and issued calls and threats, the army command was disarming regiments considered unreliable, arresting and bringing to trial Bolshevik agitators or their sympathizers for opposing the war, and reviewing plans for the contemplated military operation.

The ruling circles realized well that force alone was not going to make the soldiers keep on fighting. Alexander Kerensky, appointed War Minister, prepared orders for the offensive but set no date for it. He wanted the First All-Russia Congress of Soviets, opened on June 3, to endorse his decision.

The congress was attended by more than 1,000 delegates, among them 105 Bolsheviks. About 400 Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies sent their delegates to the congress. A resolution of the congress was enough to effect the transfer of power to the Soviets. This was what the Bolsheviks called upon the delegates to do. Yet the leaders of the conciliatory parties vigorously opposed such a measure, alleging that the country could not be governed without the bourgeoisie. One "socialist" minister even claimed that there was not a single party in the country ready to assume all power.

"There is such a party!" replied Lenin from his seat in the hall. Taking the floor, he said that the Bolsheviks were prepared to assume full power if asked to do so and outlined the programme they were propagandizing among the masses. Taking the floor for a second time, Lenin spoke on the issue of war, exposing the designs of the bourgeoisie and resolutely rejecting the idea of launching an offensive.

One after another, the leaders of the conciliatory parties objected to what Lenin had said, failing to realize that such active objection would bring about the opposite effect: the rank-and-file delegates to the congress involuntarily began to ponder over Lenin's

ideas so vehemently opposed by the leaders of the other parties. Quite a few rank-and-file Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, convinced by Lenin, joined the Bolsheviks after the congress.

However, the compromisers succeeded in passing a resolution that approved coalition with the bourgeoisie and endorsed the Provisional Government's policy.

The Petrograd workers' and soldiers' representatives attended the congress. Hailing the delegates, they insisted that the congress should agree to the handing of power over to the Soviets. The discrepancy between the sentiments of the masses and the decisions of the congress was obvious. Indignation was mounting. Calls were heard for protests in the streets. But this was precisely what the bourgeois leaders desired: they hoped to take advantage of the spontaneous protests to suppress the mass revolutionary movement. The Bolsheviks resolved to channel this mounting discontent into an organized peaceful demonstration in order to show that the congress decisions did not meet the aspirations of the working people of the capital.

The demonstration was set for June 10. Newspapers wrote about it. The congress delegates, too, knew about the planned demonstration. Posters and banners were being made in the factories and in the garrison regiments.

However, on the evening of June 9, just a few hours before the demonstration was to begin, the compromisers' leaders demanded that it be called off, charging the Bolsheviks that they were conspiring behind the congress's back with the aim of usurping power. In reality, not a single Bolshevik organization or group proposed seizing power. It was not the Bolsheviks who were conspiring, but the bourgeoisie

and the compromisers' leaders, who openly demanded disarming the Bolsheviks and disbanding the Red Guard detachments which were formed in the factories to defend the revolution. Without the Bolsheviks' knowledge, a special commission set up by the congress and composed of representatives of the petty-bourgeois parties resolved to ban the demonstration.

The Bolsheviks agreed to abide by the decision. Throughout the night of June 9 and the next morning members of Bolshevik organizations went to the factories and barracks to restrain the workers and soldiers from demonstrating. On June 10, not a single factory or military unit moved to protest, bearing witness to the immense influence wielded by the Bolsheviks of the capital among the masses and the high level of organization of the Bolshevik Party.

Distrusting the Bolsheviks, the leadership of the Congress of Soviets appointed several dozen groups, instructing them to go to the regiments and factories and verify whether the order to ban the demonstration had been fulfilled. More than 200 delegates (each group consisted of ten or so delegates) visited the factories and regiments and were surprised to find that the Bolsheviks had already been there and had persuaded workers and soldiers to submit to the congress decision. But the "visitors" not only saw for themselves the Bolsheviks' loyalty to the congress decision, they also learned what the true sentiments of the masses were: everyone they talked to disagreed with the conciliatory decisions of the congress and insisted on transfer of power to the Soviets. Fearing the loss of all its influence among the masses, the congress presidium decided to hold a demonstration under its own leadership.

The demonstration took place on June 18, with

about half a million people participating. The overwhelming majority of the demonstrators displayed the Bolshevik slogan "All Power to the Soviets!" Only a small group of congress delegates and fellow-travelling compromisers carried posters calling for confidence in the Provisional Government. Even the official daily, *Izvestiya Petrogradskogo Soveta* (Petrograd Soviet News), controlled by the conciliators, conceded that the demonstration had taken place under Bolshevik slogans.

Demonstrations also took place in Moscow, Minsk, Kiev, Riga, Krasnoyarsk and other cities. They were not as large as in the capital but they also displayed Bolshevik slogans.

The June demonstrations precipitated a second government crisis. Broad sections of the population had seen for themselves that the coalition government was unable to run the country. Not a single vital question—such as of war, land, curbing the rapacity of the bourgeoisie and of eliminating the danger of famine—had been resolved.

The compromisers' attempt to follow some "third" line, allegedly without siding either with the bourgeoisie or with the proletariat, had also been exposed. In the event of a fierce class struggle, there can be no third line. The SRs and Mensheviks had refused, in fact, to support the proletariat and its party and were gradually slipping into the positions of the bourgeoisie. Their influence among the masses was rapidly diminishing.

The June developments did confirm the correctness of the Bolsheviks' policies. The working people of the capital rallied around the Bolshevik Party. This signified the inevitable victory of the Bolsheviks' leadership throughout the country.

### **The Third Political Crisis: Seizure of All Power by the Bourgeoisie**

The fact that the demonstration was held on June 18 was not fortuitous: on that day an offensive was to be launched on the front. This demonstration was to express support of the congress and its decisions, and to bless the criminal intention of crushing the revolution with the help of the war.

The ruling coalition talked a great deal about the forthcoming offensive; the soldiers were worn out by the countless meetings and endless pro-war agitation. As to the operational, technical and administrative preparation for the offensive, it was quite obviously inadequate. Essentially, the army command relied on the old plan for the offensive, of which spies had long since informed the enemy, enabling it to bring up reinforcements. The offensive was begun by the armies of the South-Western Front. On June 18, 300,000 troops broke through the German defences along a 70-kilometre front. But the enemy, better armed and duly prepared, mounted a counter-offensive and nullified the successes of the Russian army.

It is interesting to note that the command chose to send into battle those divisions in which Bolshevik influence was strong. This corroborated the fact that the offensive was to be instrumental in suppressing the revolution and above all in crushing its leading force, the Bolsheviks. The Cadet newspaper *Rech* (Speech) said with cynical frankness: "There is hardly any doubt that the offensive will deal as heavy a blow to the internal enemy—Bolshevism—as to the external one."



As soon as news of the failure of the offensive arrived, the ruling circles set about implementing a plan that had been drawn up for such a contingency. The Cadets declared their withdrawal from the government; the idea was to leave the "socialist" ministers the sole claim to power. Knowing that the compromisers would be afraid to assume full responsibility for governing and would not want to remain in power alone, the bourgeoisie intended to reinstate its representatives in the government and impose its terms on the compromisers, which included assumption of full power by the Provisional Government, the barring of the Soviets from exerting any influence on state affairs and, most important, suppression of Bolshevism.

By July the situation in the country had changed dramatically. Economic dislocation had worsened under the Provisional Government. There was a shortage of foodstuffs. Prices soared, while wages persistently lagged behind. Famine was an immediate menace. The value of the rouble was continuously falling. The printing presses were turning out huge amounts of paper money—now in the form of large sheets to be cut into 20- and 40-rouble notes. The people contemptuously called the new paper money "Kerenki" after the new Prime Minister Kerensky. But most importantly, the war, which the authorities had promised to end, had begun anew. It brought about new casualties and increased the indescribable suffering of the people.

The mounting difficulties and a steep fall in the standard of living resulted in a higher level of political consciousness among the people—during a revolution people's political awareness grows hourly, not daily. The news of the Cadets' withdrawal from the government spread rapidly in the capital. "The

Cadets are stirring up trouble again"—warned speakers at spontaneous meetings in factories and barracks.

On the evening of July 2, a meeting was held in the 1st Machine-Gun Regiment with the participation of workers and soldiers who had returned from the front. It was a stormy meeting. One after another, soldiers took the floor and called for the overthrow of the government and the transfer of all power to the Soviets. The audience boisterously cheered them on and chanted "Down with the ministers-capitalists!" It took the Bolsheviks great efforts to calm the soldiers down. A Bolshevik-sponsored resolution was adopted expressing protest against the Provisional Government's policies. But the resolution did not satisfy the excited soldiers. Throughout the night meetings and heated arguments went on in the barracks, with speakers calling for the overthrow of the government.

On the morning of July 3, the whole regiment assembled again for a meeting which took a resolution to call upon all the regiments of the garrison and workers of Petrograd to come out against the government. Several elected delegations were promptly sent to the regiments and factories. One delegation was dispatched to Kronstadt, the Baltic Fleet base.

The Bolsheviks were against immediate action for it would be a gamble to start an uprising without the support of the provinces and the army. The All-Russia Congress of Soviets held shortly before showed that the majority of the working people and the army did not trust the compromisers. The Bolsheviks' Central Committee adopted a decision on restraining the masses from action. Bolsheviks went to the factories and barracks. People listened to them

but did not agree: "We believe in you, but our patience is at an end, life has become too unbearable."

Seeing that to restrain the masses was impossible, the Bolsheviks resolved to become their leader and to turn the protests into an organized peaceful demonstration under the slogan "All Power to the Soviets!"

*A wave of large-scale demonstrations swept the country. They were directed against the bourgeois Provisional Government, which declared its readiness to continue the war to its "victorious end". On June 18, 1917 a demonstration, in which half a million workers and soldiers participated, took place in Petrograd under the slogans "Down with the War!", "All Power to the Soviets!" and "Down with Ministers-Capitalists!"*



Lenin, who was ill at that time, was not in the capital. But he returned to Petrograd as soon as he heard about the events and endorsed the Central Committee's decision.

On the morning of July 4, the demonstration began, with more than 500,000 people taking part. The demonstrators sent a 90-member delegation to the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets to convey their demand that all power be transferred to the Soviets. But the SRs and Mensheviks of the committee had reached an agreement with the government to crush the demonstration. Troops still loyal

*Mass demonstrations of July 3 and 4 were the last attempt to make the Soviets take power into their own hands. The Provisional Government opened fire on the peaceful demonstrators.*



to the Provisional Government were summoned from the front. In some districts of the city the demon-

*After the events of July 1917 the working people at large began to support the Bolsheviks, who consistently followed a course towards a socialist revolution. The political situation in the country became further aggravated.*



strators were fired on by cadets of military schools and Cossacks.

The newly-arrived troops, together with the cadets and Cossacks, launched reprisals. Martial law was proclaimed in the capital. Bolshevik leaders were hunted and arrested.

The printing-house of the Bolshevik central newspaper, *Pravda*, and the headquarters of the Bolsheviks' Central Committee were raided. The government ordered the disbandment of the regiments that had taken part in the demonstration of July 3 and 4.

Reprisals were unleashed in the army too. The death penalty was introduced at the front. Regiments and even divisions, where, in the command's opinion, Bolshevik influence was strong, were disbanded. The Provisional Government issued a warrant for Lenin's arrest. To justify their decision, the authorities circulated the "testimony" given by an agent provocateur saying that the Bolshevik leader, Lenin, had connections with the German General Staff and was acting on its instructions. Lenin was compelled to go into hiding.

The bourgeoisie could only applaud the tactics of the conciliatory parties' leaders who had supported the government and deserted to the counter-revolutionary camp. They had also complied with the bourgeoisie's demand to oust the Soviets from power: though they had not yet dismantled the Soviets, as the Cadets demanded, the compromisers had turned them into an appendage to the counter-revolutionary government. The new government continued to be called a coalition government: seven of its 15 members were Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, but now it was an integral government of the

counter-revolution. Whereas in the old coalition the bourgeoisie ruled with the support of the petty-bourgeois parties, now the coalition government included SR and Menshevik leaders. All power had passed into the hands of the bourgeoisie. Dual power had come to an end.

### **III. Against the Government of the Counter-Revolution**

#### **The Bourgeoisie Unleashes a Civil War**

Having seized power, the bourgeoisie resolved to nullify the gains of the revolution. The capitalists not only refused to introduce an eight-hour workday, but began to cut down wages that were already totally insufficient for maintaining a livelihood. They organized lockouts in entire industries. The number of unemployed was growing rapidly. The conditions of the proletariat went from bad to worse.

In the countryside the landowners grew bolder. Aided by army units, they took away from the peasants the heretofore fallow lands which the latter had tilled and raised the rent on land. Many members of land committees were arrested.

The government's reactionary nature revealed in its nationalities policy too. One conflict followed another: disputes flared up with the Ukrainians, who were forbidden to set up national administrative bodies, and the Finnish Diet was closed.

The exploiter classes have always employed the "stick and carrot" policy towards the people: while launching a fierce onslaught on the people's rights, they have camouflaged their true aims with minor concessions.

This time the government promised to convene the



Constituent Assembly and even set a date for it—September 17. It enacted a law banning the sale and purchase of land. Pressed by demands for workers' control over industry, the government went so far as to set up a special economic council and a central economic committee for controlling production. But these were concessions on paper which did nothing to ease the plight of the masses.

In launching its offensive against the working people, the bourgeoisie, however, failed to take due account of the intensity of their resistance, their heightened political awareness and better organization. It also proved wrong in its assessment of the strength of the Bolsheviks: it believed that the Bolshevik Party had been smashed, outlawed, and cut off from the masses, and that it had lost its influence.

In fact, there was no flight from the ranks of the Bolshevik Party as was observed among the SRs and Mensheviks and other political parties suffering setbacks and defeats. On the contrary, even when it was persecuted the Party continued to be joined by new activists from among the working class who had become convinced of the correctness of its policy and of its dedication to the proletarian cause. The Bolshevik Party owed its success to the fact that it was a party of a new type, to its adherence to strict class criteria in admitting new members, to its strict discipline and efficient organization. When being imprisoned, Bolsheviks remained disciplined and retained their faith in the victory of the proletarian cause. For example, later, when the October uprising began in Petrograd, the 2,000 Bolsheviks incarcerated in the prison of Minsk marched out of the prison as an organized regiment and took part in the battles fought for the revolution. The Dvinsk prison inmates included hundreds of soldiers, members of unit com-

mittees, arrested after the July events. After being transferred to the Butyrskaya Prison in Moscow and then liberated during the uprising, they were the most militant contingent (called the "Dvintsy") of Moscow's revolutionary fighters in October 1917. Toughened by the ordeals following the July events, the Bolsheviks managed to preserve their forces, maintain their ties with the masses and help them withstand the onslaught of the exploiter classes.

The new situation in the country demanded a change in tactics. The question was discussed at the 6th Congress of the Bolshevik Party held in Petrograd from July 26 to August 3. The congress was conducted in semi-legal conditions. Lenin did not attend the congress, but he directed its work, drafted resolutions and edited the text of the decisions. More than 160 organizations with a membership of 240,000 people were represented at the congress. In the three months that had passed since the April Conference, Party membership had trebled, with workers now accounting for more than 60 per cent of the total. There were 41,000 Communists in Petrograd, 50,000 in Moscow and the Moscow region, 25,000 in the Urals, 16,000 in the Donets Coal Basin (Donbass), 14,000 in the Baltic area, 13,000 in the Volga region, and 10,000 in the Kiev region.

The question of tactics was the principal and decisive one at the congress. Its resolution stressed that dual power in the country had ended and that all power was in the hands of the bourgeoisie. The SRs and Mensheviks had defected to the camp of the bourgeoisie and had joined it in fighting the revolution. In these conditions the Bolshevik slogan "All Power to the Soviets!", which had been valid for the peaceful period of the revolution, no longer accorded

with the people's interests and with the tasks of developing the revolution. However, the fact that it was withdrawn did not signify renunciation of the Soviets as the new form of state authority. The problem was that with their present composition the Soviets, led by the Mensheviks and SRs who had stained their hands with the blood of the people, could no longer function as organs of people's power.

The Bolshevik Party adopted the policy directed towards achieving an armed uprising that would secure the transfer of power to the working people. Lenin wrote at that time: "All hopes for a peaceful development of the Russian revolution have vanished for good. This is the objective situation: either complete victory of the military dictatorship, or victory for the workers' armed uprising; the latter victory is only possible when the insurrection coincides with a deep, mass upheaval against the government and the bourgeoisie caused by economic disruption and the prolongation of the war."\*

The bourgeoisie's jubilation over its seizure of power and the defection of the petty-bourgeois parties to its side was short-lived. The government soon saw at every turn that the revolution had not been crushed. Meanwhile, the continuing war was using up the country's resources. The population was famished. The idea of establishing a military dictatorship was discussed with growing frequency in government circles. General Denikin, one of the most active leaders of the counter-revolution, summed up the frame of mind of the ruling classes as follows: "The country has been looking for a leader." The general was wrong only in that it was not the country, but the counter-revolution that was looking for a dictator. At first this role was claimed by Kerensky. He had

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\* V. I. Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 25, p. 177.

served the bourgeoisie loyally, having massacred participants in the July events and introduced capital punishment on the front as the generals demanded. But the bourgeoisie could not forgive him his connection with the Socialist-Revolutionaries and his vacillations and opted for a "man with a sword": General Kornilov was appointed Supreme Commander-in-Chief and groomed for the role of dictator. The ceremony of "coronation" was to take place on August 12, in Moscow, at a specially convened state conference composed of representatives of all the propertied strata of the population.

To impart greater significance to the conference, the Provisional Government resolved, with the consent of the SR and Menshevik leaders, to postpone the elections to the Constituent Assembly for two months, from September 17 to November 12.

The Bolsheviks were not admitted to the conference, as the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets did not want the Bolshevik delegates to express any opposition to the conference. The Bolshevik Party's Central Committee called upon the Party members to expose the conspiracy of the bourgeoisie, while the Moscow organization decided to hold a one-day general strike in protest against the Provisional Government's action. No demonstration was planned as the counter-revolutionaries might shoot it down as they had done in July.

On the day the conference opened, the strike began. Over 400,000 people took part in it. They included workers of all of Moscow's industries—metal works, textile mills, chemical and food factories; trams stopped, restaurant workers went on strike. The conference delegates not only had to walk, although the Moscow authorities had promised them free transportation, they were also left without

any meals, although they had been promised banquets.

The Moscow general strike ruined the "coronation" of the would-be dictator. General Kornilov arrived in Moscow and was received in a grand way. However, enraged by the workers' actions, he left before the conference was over.

With growing rage, the counter-revolution continued to make preparations for a coup. Its centre was the General Headquarters, where General Kornilov and his staff were drawing up plans for the revolt. The idea was to send a Mounted Corps, which included Cossack units, and the so-called Savage Division consisting of men from the North Caucasus who did not know Russian and blindly obeyed their commanders. The corps was to put down a "Bolshevik insurrection", which would be staged by agents of the counter-revolution. In addition to the corps, troops deployed at the Northern and Western fronts, as well as in Kiev, Moscow and the Don area, were prepared for action. A whole army consisting of a dozen infantry and cavalry divisions was to move on Petrograd. The suppression of the "insurrection" would be followed by the proclamation of a military dictatorship, headed by General Kornilov, which was to crush the revolution throughout the country, disband the Soiets and all other democratic organizations, outlaw the Bolsheviks, execute their leaders and restore the monarchy in Russia.

Confident that the preparations had been completed and the Mounted Corps was approaching the capital, Kornilov ordered the prepared units to start the revolt. On the night of August 26 he signed a "Manifesto to the Russian People" in which he declared that he was taking power into his hands.

Kerensky knew about the counter-revolutionaries'

intentions and helped them, in the hope of being retained as head of the government. However, seeing that he had been passed over and fearing that the counter-revolutionaries would make short work not only of the Bolsheviks but also of his party and himself, he decided to drop out of the game and even called for combatting the Kornilov revolt.

But the real struggle against the counter-revolution was started by the working people, who were outraged with the Kornilov revolt. Following the Bolsheviks' call, Petrograd workers quickly formed Red Guard detachments which moved to stop the counter-revolutionary troops. Revolutionary-military committees were set up rapidly and revolutionary units formed in all the cities lying on the route of the Kornilovites' advance. The revolt was nipped in the bud. The revolutionary masses forced Kerensky's government to arrest General Kornilov and his closest associates. General Krymov, commander of the 3rd Mounted Corps, shot himself, as he saw the complete failure of the counter-revolution.

In the context of the upsurge of the mass movement and the opposition of many of the Soviets to Kornilov, Lenin suggested to the SRs and Mensheviks to concede power to the Soviets, but they rejected this suggestion—the last chance for a peaceful transition of power to the Soviets.

Now the only way out was to overthrow the Provisional Government in an armed insurrection and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. On August 31, the Petrograd Soviet adopted a Bolshevik resolution calling for transfer of power to the Soviets. On September 5, the Moscow Soviet endorsed the Bolsheviks' resolution which was acceded to by many Soviets in the provinces. The Bolsheviks began to win the support of the Soviets throughout the entire country.

## **A New Revolution Becomes Not Only Inevitable, but Essential**

The Kornilov gamble drastically altered the situation in the country and led to changes in the forms of struggle of the working people and all those oppressed. In some instances workers ousted factory owners and took over the management of production. They set up special workers' commissions, often with the participation of technical specialists, which organized the production process, obtaining the necessary means and raw materials and establishing contacts with other enterprises.

A change had also taken place within the peasant movement. The poor peasants realized that a Kornilovite victory would enhance the landowners' power and thus put an end to their hopes of obtaining land. Troubled by such a prospect and angered by the government, which encouraged and backed the landowners and was obviously reluctant to take steps to solve the agrarian problem, the peasants began with growing frequency to seize the landowners' estates and farm implements and distribute them among themselves.

In the army, the soldiers drove out reactionary commanders and elected new ones, men whom they trusted. The soldiers refused to go on fighting; whole large units were leaving the trenches, cursing a war they were fed up with.

The movement among the oppressed nations had also undergone a change. There had always been two trends within the movement—a bourgeois trend and a revolutionary-democratic trend. The national, subordinate bourgeoisie sought to escape from the reign of the great-leader nation in order to exploit the working people itself and avoid having to share its

profits with the exploiter nation. In the revolutionary-democratic trend, on the other hand, working people of the oppressed nation fought against exploitation on the part of both their own and Russian bourgeoisie.

After the Kornilov revolt the national bourgeoisie, which had heretofore supported the central government of Russia, became convinced that the latter was unable to stop the revolution. So separatist sentiments increased and the national bourgeoisie began looking for foreign patrons in an attempt to retain its power and at the same time fight the revolution. Among working people of the outlying areas the revolutionary-democratic movement had become more active as they realized that their social and national problems could be solved only in joint struggle on the side of the all-Russian revolutionary movement. As a result, the national-liberation struggle became a powerful current within the general revolutionary movement in the country.

A new revolution was becoming not only inevitable, but essential. The situation could have no other outcome. All the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties had proved incapable of taking effective action. The Bolshevik Party embarked on a course towards an armed uprising.

From his place in hiding Lenin closely followed all the developments in the country. During the 110 days that he remained underground, Lenin wrote more than 60 articles and letters. Among them the book *The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It* was of particular importance. It formulated the Bolsheviks' platform and showed how the country could be saved from disaster. After describing the misery and hunger the people were experiencing under the rule of the capitalists and landowners, Lenin outlined





*People throughout the country demanded a genuine democratic republic, peace and land. A demonstration in a Siberian town in September, 1917.*

revolutionary measures that could prevent a catastrophe: workers' control over production; nationalization of the banks, syndicates, etc.; confiscation of landowners' estates and nationalization of land. The basic point of the Bolshevik platform on the eve of the proletarian revolution was Lenin's proposition on the possibility of socialism being victorious initially in just one country.

In two letters addressed to the Central Committee and the Petrograd and Moscow committees of the Party from September 12 to 14, Lenin summed up his analysis of the situation and explained with utmost clarity why the Bolsheviks could and should take



*A meeting of soldiers and working people in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.*

power precisely at that time. Leadership in the Soviets in both capitals had passed into the hands of the Bolsheviki, backed by the people. After taking power, the Soviets would immediately conclude a democratic peace, and confiscate the land from the landowners without compensation, handing it over to the peasants. "The Bolsheviki, having obtained a majority in the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies of both capitals," wrote Lenin, "can and *must* take state power into their own hands."\*

Lenin set no definite date for the uprising in his letters. It was up to the Central Committee to decide

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\* V. I. Lenin, *Coll. Works*. Vol. 26, p. 19.

this question and choose the most appropriate moment. The important thing so far was that the whole of the Party should realize the necessity of insurrection.

### **Oust the Government Today, for Tomorrow It May Be Too Late**

Just over three weeks had passed since the middle of September when Lenin had called for an insurrection, but the situation in the country had greatly changed.

On the pretext that Germany was concentrating troops against Petrograd, the Provisional Government decided to withdraw the revolutionary-minded garrison from the capital, thereby leaving the Bolsheviks without the support of the revolutionary troops. At the same time, there grew a danger that revolutionary Petrograd might be surrendered to the Germans.

For their part, the German authorities were frightened by the revolutionary ferment in their own country, which was growing under the impact of the revolutionary events in Russia. Fearing a further development of the revolutionary situation in their rear, they contemplated concluding a separate peace with Russia in order together with the Russian bourgeoisie, while it was still in power, to crush the revolution.

These developments made it necessary to set a date for the uprising. On October 3, Lenin arrived secretly in Petrograd. On October 10, at a meeting of the Central Committee Lenin delivered a report on the current situation in the international arena and

within the country, and made a conclusion on the necessity of insurrection. A majority of the Central Committee members voted in favour of immediate action. The Central Committee began to create the headquarters of the uprising: a Revolutionary Military Committee was set up under the Petrograd Soviet to direct the actions.

Two Central Committee's members, Zinovyev and Kamenev, who voted against the resolution, did not abide by the Central Committee's decision. They committed treason by sending a letter to a Menshevik newspaper in which they stated their disagreement with the Central Committee's decision on insurrection. Thus forewarned by the traitors, the Provisional Government intensified preparations for crushing the awaited uprising. Units still loyal to the government were summoned from the front. SR and Menshevik leaders, for their part, took extra measures: they decided to postpone holding the Second Congress of Soviets until October 25 and asked their organizations to do everything to secure a majority at the congress.

It was risky to act in such conditions, and the Bolsheviks postponed the uprising. But they did not give up. On the contrary, they stepped up the formation of Red Guard detachments and checked general mood in the regiments of the garrison. The Revolutionary Military Committee sent its commissars to all the military units to rally the garrison and prepare it for action. Large-scale propaganda work was conducted in the factories and military barracks. On the eve of the uprising the total strength of the Red Guard detachments was more than 20,000. The Bolsheviks had mass support not only in Petrograd and Moscow. Red Guard detachments were being organized in all parts of the country.

Lenin felt that Petrograd should be the centre of the insurrection as it was the location of the government and its institutions as well as of the Central Committee of the Bolsheviks, supported by the staunch, determined and experienced Petrograd contingent of the working class and the revolutionary fleet and garrison.

Taking into consideration the fact that the SR and Menshevik leaders had deliberately postponed the Congress of Soviets until October 25—they obviously sought to frustrate the Bolsheviks' plans and at the same time wanted to secure a majority even at the cost of rigging the elections—Lenin insisted on starting the uprising before the congress. Furthermore, the Bolsheviks' unreliable fellow-travellers, the Left SRs, although they professed support for the Bolsheviks and even nominated their representatives to the Revolutionary Military Committee of the Petrograd Soviet, had not broken with the Right SRs. Moreover, in the course of the preparations for the uprising it became known that Trotsky was in favour of putting off the uprising until after the congress, which, he believed, should decide the question of transferring power to the Soviets. Trotsky, and Zinovyev and Kamenev, who supported him, cited "legalist" considerations to back up their arguments: a decision to assume power reached at the congress, they said, would be in conformity with the law, and should the government then refuse to abide by it, it would be compelled to do so. What the "legalists" did not understand or did not wish to understand was that their proposal for postponing a decision concerning power until the Congress of Soviets not only failed to take into account quite probable vacillations on the part of unreliable fellow-travellers and the possible rigging of elections by the SRs and Mensheviks, but

would in fact divulge the date of the uprising to the enemy.

Lenin insisted that the insurrection be started before the Second Congress of Soviets. It was essential to forestall the enemy, who expected the uprising on the opening day of the congress.

In accordance with Lenin's proposal, the Central Committee launched the insurrection on October 24, before the congress opened. Red Guard detachments and previously appointed military units occupied government buildings and took up posts at bridges across the river Neva, ensuring communication between the workers' districts and the centre. They met with no resistance in seizing prisons and freeing political prisoners, who immediately joined the ranks of the insurrectionists. The railway stations were taken over, and detachments were formed to deal with the possible arrival of counter-revolutionary reinforcements from the front.

No strike had been announced—there was no need for it since the factories were now in the hands of the workers. More volunteer Red Guard detachments were formed at factories. Sailors were arriving from Kronstadt, ready to take part in the uprising. By the evening of the following day sailors' detachments were in the capital. The State Bank, the Central Post and Telegraph Offices as well as district post offices were also seized. The revolutionaries occupied the offices of bourgeois newspapers.

The Provisional Government was wasting time trying to get the cooperation of the Central Telegraph Office. Streams of telegrams promising reinforcements were coming to the Winter Palace from the front, yet not a single soldier turned up.

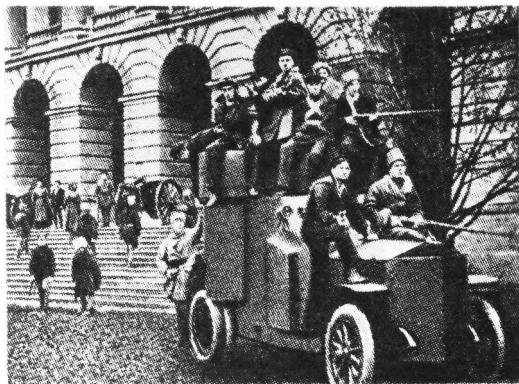
On the evening of October 24, the Central Committee asked Lenin to come from his secret hiding

place to the Smolny Institute, headquarters of the insurrection. The leader of the Party, the inspirer and organizer of the armed uprising, stood at the helm of the revolution. Lenin demanded the immediate capture of the Winter Palace and the arrest of the members of the Provisional Government gathered there. He insisted that "under no circumstances should power be left in the hands of Kerensky and Co. until the 25th... the matter must be decided without fail this very evening or this very night."\*

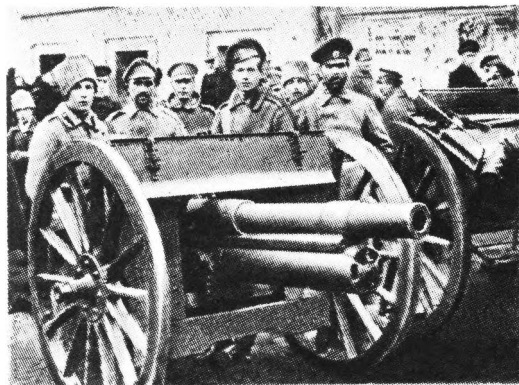
\* V. I. Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 26, p. 235.

*The Smolny Institute, headquarters of the revolution.*





*Red Guard detachments—ready to enter into battle against the Provisional Government's forces.*



*Moscow. Revolutionary artillerymen.*

On the night of October 24, the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party assembled for a meeting. All reports testified to the complete success of the uprising. The Central Committee discussed the possible



composition of the new, revolutionary government and Lenin's reports on peace and land which were prepared for the Second Congress of Soviets. Lenin was instructed to compose an address announcing the victory of the uprising and the overthrow of the Provisional Government. On October 25, at 10 o'clock in the morning the following address, written by Lenin, was adopted:

"To the citizens of Russia!

"The Provisional Government has been deposed. State power has passed into the hands of the organ of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies—the Revolutionary Military Committee, which heads the Petrograd proletariat and the garrison.

"The cause for which the people have fought, namely, the immediate offer of a democratic peace, the abolition of landed proprietorship, workers' control over production, and the establishment of Soviet power—this cause has been secured.

"Long live the revolution of workers, soldiers and peasants!"\*

It would be hard to find another instance of such succinctness in announcing the overthrow of an old government and the transfer of power to a new class, and in indicating the programme of the new government. The very brevity of the message seemed to say: enough of words and promises, which were given in abundance by all the previous governments; it's time to get down to the work, so long awaited by the famished, suffering people.

Late on the evening of October 25 the Second Congress of Soviets was opened. By that time 649 delegates had been registered. The Bolsheviks had

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\* V. I. Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 26, p. 236.

390 mandates, or nearly 60 per cent of the total. The SRs, who represented a single faction on registration day, had 160 mandates, or nearly 25 per cent of the total. Mensheviks of all trends numbered 72 (11 per cent). On the opening day the SR delegation split into a Left and Right wing, with the Left SRs forming a separate faction comprising the overwhelming majority of the SR delegates.

More than 400 of the country's Soviets were represented at the Congress. There were more than 200 delegates from national outlying regions and about as many delegates from the Army and the Navy. Thus, tens of millions of working people of all nationalities, virtually the entire country and its army, all the main forces of the revolution, were represented at the congress. It was a forum expressing the will and strength of the people.

However, the work of the congress began with attempts to ruin the meeting. The spokesmen of the Right-wing SRs and Mensheviks read out declarations denouncing the revolution and said they would walk out of the congress and go to the Winter Palace "to die together with their envoys". According to the Credentials Committee, 51 delegates (about 7 per cent of the total) left the congress. They took the stenographers with them, and as a result the history of the congress was written later on the basis of its documents, journalists' notes and recollections. That was the first instance of sabotage of the Soviet power, which was later used extensively by the forces of counter-revolution.

Scarcely had the last of those who left the congress disappeared behind the door than an SR delegate mounted the rostrum and announced that the entire Left SR faction would stay on at the congress togeth-

er with the Bolcheviks. The statement was greeted with stormy applause.

In the meantime, the revolutionary forces had fully surrounded the Palace Square where the Winter Palace and the Military District Headquarters, which directed the defence of the deposed Provisional Government, were situated. The Winter Palace was defended by about 3,000 military school cadets, officers and a women's "Shock Battalion".

On October 25, the cruiser *Aurora* gave the signal for attack by firing a blank shot, and the Red Guard units concentrated at the Winter Palace rushed forward.

No one of the attackers knew where the members of the deposed government were at the moment. Finally, the terror-stricken ministers were found sitting in a room. Not long before that, the last telegram was sent from the Palace to GHQ: "The Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies has declared the Government deposed and has demanded transfer of power under the threat of shelling the Winter Palace from the guns of the Peter and Paul Fortress and the cruiser *Aurora*. The Government can transfer power only to the Constituent Assembly, therefore it decided not to surrender but to place itself under the protection of the people and the army. Expedite the dispatch of troops."

At 1:50 a.m. (October 26) the revolutionaries began drawing up a statement on the arrest of the ex-ministers, who were taken to the Peter and Paul Fortress, up until that time used only for political prisoners of the tsar. Officers and cadets defending the Winter Palace were disarmed and released.

News about the fall of the last bulwark of the former government was jubilantly received by the congress delegates. They adopted the appeal "To

Workers, Soldiers and Peasants!" drafted by Lenin. "Backed by the will of the vast majority of the workers, soldiers and peasants, backed by the victorious uprising of the workers and the garrison which has taken place in Petrograd, the Congress takes power into its own hands,"\* the appeal said, proclaiming the transfer of all power in the localities to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies.

On the evening of October 26, the second sitting of the congress opened.

The delegates endorsed a resolution issued by the Congress Presidium on abolishing the death penalty at the front and releasing all officers and men arrested for political opposition to the authorities as well as all land-committee members who had been taken into custody by the former Provisional Government and its SR ministers of agriculture.

Then Lenin delivered a report on peace. "The question of peace is a burning question, the painful question of the day," he pointed out. "Much has been said and written on the subject, and all of you, no doubt, have discussed it quite a lot. Permit me, therefore, to proceed to read a declaration which the government you elect should publish."\*\*

The Soviet government called upon all the belligerent peoples and their governments to begin immediate negotiations for the conclusion of a just, democratic peace. To avoid any misinterpretations or diplomatic ploys, the Decree on Peace stated that a democratic peace was a peace without annexations and indemnities. The bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties had tried to interpret the concept of annex-

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\* V. I. Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 26, p. 247.

\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 249.

The first page of Lenin's draft of the Declaration of Rights of the Working and Exploited People which proclaimed the abolition of any exploitation of man by man and the beginning of the building of socialism. This document, adopted on January 5, 1918, was virtually the first constitution of the Soviet state.

Декларация прав  
трудящегося и семьи.  
Агитационная карточка.

Упр. Служб. и Зав. библ.

I + *Pennisetum setaceum* ~~peruvianum~~ *peruvianum* Pennell. Cat. of  
Plants, Colorado. + *Graminaceae* Bright. The leaves  
of grasses + an inflorescence of grasses.

2. *Chlorophanes porphyreus* <sup>1</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>2</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>3</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>4</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>5</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>6</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>7</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>8</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>9</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>10</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>11</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>12</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>13</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>14</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>15</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>16</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>17</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>18</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>19</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>20</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>21</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>22</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>23</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>24</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>25</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>26</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>27</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>28</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>29</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>30</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>31</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>32</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>33</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>34</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>35</sup> *porphyreus* <sup>36</sup> *porphyreus* 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[illegible]

1. Задача содержания животных в условиях  
клетки, в вольере, в загоне, в пастбище и  
в природе при разведении и в хозяйстве  
обширного содержания животных.

ation in accordance with their class interests; they regarded as the annexed territories only those lands that had been seized by imperialists in the war. It was pointed out in the decree that annexation or seizure of foreign lands meant the incorporation of a small or weak nation into a large or powerful state without the expressed consent and wish of that nation, irrespective of when such forcible incorporation took place, irrespective also of the degree of development or backwardness of the nation forcibly retained within its borders, and irrespective, finally, of whether this nation was in Europe or elsewhere.

The Soviet decree called for a democratic peace for all nations. To confirm its renunciation of secret diplomacy, the Soviet government said that it would immediately publish the secret treaties endorsed or concluded by the tsarist government and the Provisional Government, and would then annul them.

The Decree on Peace exposed to all of mankind the plunderous nature of the First World War. In issuing the decree, the congress proclaimed the idea of peaceful coexistence of the Soviet state and the capitalist countries. The principles embodied in the first Soviet law on peace have formed the basis of Soviet foreign policy.

On the same evening Lenin made public the Decree on Land. It consisted of three points:

1. Landed estates are abolished forthwith without any compensation.

2. Landed estates, and all crown, monastery and church lands, with all their livestock, implements, buildings and everything pertaining thereto, shall be placed at the disposal of local land committees and Soviets of Peasants' Deputies pending the convocation of the Constituent Assembly.

3. All damage to confiscated property, which hence-

forth belongs to all the people, is hereby declared a grave crime to be punished by the revolutionary courts. The local Soviets of Peasants' Deputies shall take all necessary measures to assure the observance of order during the confiscation, determine which estates should be confiscated, draw up exact inventories of all property confiscated and protect the confiscated property in a revolutionary manner.

Never before in history had a law which affected the interests of no less than 100 million peasants been so clearly and concisely formulated as the Decree on Land.

The congress endorsed Lenin's assignment as head of the government, which was called the Council of People's Commissars. The congress also elected the new All-Russia Central Executive Committee in which the Bolsheviks constituted a majority.

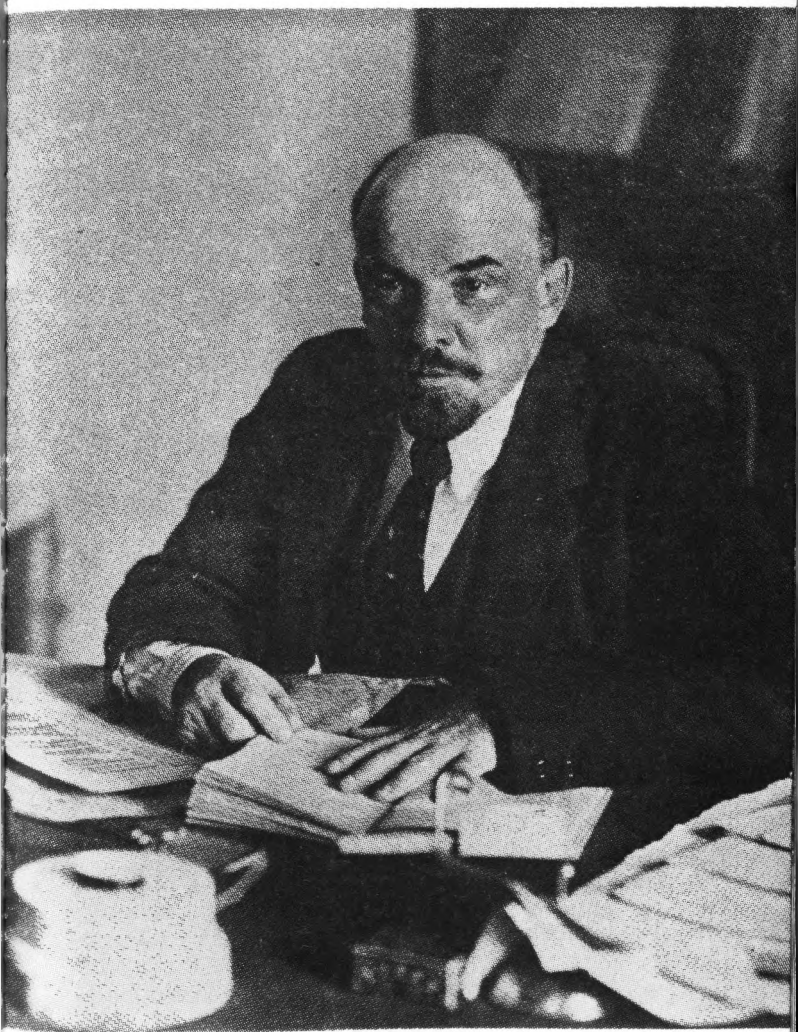
Day was already breaking when the Second Congress of Soviets completed its work.

### **What the October Revolution Gave to the Peoples of Russia and to the Working People of the World**

Prior to the October Revolution, mankind had known only one form of proletarian dictatorship—the Paris Commune. Although the Paris Commune existed for only 72 days, its experience, achievements and revealed potentialities became a possession of the working people of the world thanks to Marxism.

The October Revolution brought forth another form of proletarian dictatorship—the Soviets, em-

*V. I. Lenin.*





bodying the alliance of the proletariat and the poor peasantry. It was an incomparably more advanced and democratic form of power than any other form before it, for it involved the broadest masses of the population in the administration of the state. It released the creative abilities of the people that had been smothered by capital.

This is not to say that the Soviets are the ultimate achievement of the people and that the liberation of the oppressed world can proceed only in this form. Other forms can emerge through the creative efforts of the masses, as has been evidenced by people's democracy, which has become the second form of proletarian dictatorship after the Soviets. But the type, essence and nature of power is invariably the same—this is the power of workers in alliance with the non-proletarian strata of working people.

The world-historic significance of the October Revolution consists, among other things, in the fact that it has shown the way to the deliverance of mankind from disastrous wars which are inevitable under imperialism. The First World War left ten million dead and thirty million crippled. The Second World War, unleashed by fascism, took a thrice bigger toll. A third, with the use of nuclear weapons, carries the threat of the destruction of all civilization.

The system established by the socialist revolution is capable not only of preventing imperialists from plunging mankind into war, but also of ruling out war as a means of settling disputes and conflicts between nations as well as confrontations. Socialism and peace are inseparable. It is not by chance that the Soviet government's first legislative act was the Decree on Peace, which set forth the basic principles of Soviet foreign policy.



*"Lenin is with us!" say Soviet Communists as they launch the implementation of a new tremendous programme of the further development and perfection of socialist society adopted by the 27th Congress of the CPSU. The Soviet Communists remain faithful to the Leninist ideals of peace and international solidarity.*

For many centuries peasants had dreamed of land. Various bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties had promised them liberation from oppression by land-owners. The October Revolution alone fulfilled the proletarian party's pledges and turned the land over to the peasants. Socialism puts an end to poverty and pauperism among peasants and to their age-old small-proprietor attachment to the ownership of tiny pieces of land with its inevitable concomitants—semi-starvation and back-breaking labour. Socialism incorporates free labour on free land.

For centuries enslaved, oppressed and forced to bow down before the stronger, the world's nations saw from the experience of the liberated peoples of Russia that imperialism is not omnipotent. The Soviet government's decrees on the abolition of national oppression and the recognition of the right of nations to self-determination, up to secession and the formation of independent national republics, showed the oppressed peoples the way to liberation.

For the first time in history, the working class won an eight-hour workday. It had been pressing this demand for many decades, but prior to the October Revolution none of the developed capitalist states had enacted a law to this effect. The October Revolution introduced workers' control over production. As a result, a mere half a year later, most of the factories and transport became the property of the proletarian state.

The victory of the October Revolution heightened the organization of the working class all over the world. Prior to it, a Communist party had existed only in Russia. Within the five years after it, about 40 Communist parties were founded in the world. Their emergence was determined, of course, by the internal requirements of the working people of their coun-

tries, but the decrees of the Soviet government, like powerful headlights, illuminated the difficult path leading to their foundation. Herein lies the international significance of the October Revolution.

Минц Исаак Израилевич

КАК ПРОИЗОШЛА ОКТЯБРЬСКАЯ РЕВОЛЮЦИЯ

на английском языке

Цена 35 коп.

*Dear Reader,*  
*We hope that you have found this publication interesting and useful. We would be most grateful if you could fill out this questionnaire and send it to us. All you have to do is to put a cross in the appropriate box, or, where such boxes are not provided, to express your opinion briefly and legibly.*

**1. How long have you been familiar with Novosti publications?**

First time	Under 1 year	1-2 years	3-5 years	Over 5
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**2. Where did you obtain this publication?**

From a shop	From the Soviet embassy in your country	From an exhibition	From friends or acquaintances	In the USSR
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Other sources \_\_\_\_\_

**3. What is your opinion of this publication in terms of ...**

Good	Satisfactory	Could be better	Hard to say
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...useful information content?

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...new information content?

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...lucid exposition?

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**4. What is your opinion of the English translation?**

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**5. What do you think of the publication's general design and general appearance?**

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**Of the quality of the printing and illustrations?**

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# HOW THE REVOLUTION WAS WON

The author of this booklet, Academician Isaak Izrailevich Mints, is a noted Soviet historian whose books include the three-volume *History of the Great October Revolution* and books on various topics relating to the October Revolution and the Civil War in Russia, and Soviet foreign policy.

Academician Mints won two State prizes and the Lenin prize and the title of Hero of Socialist Labour was conferred on him.

